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THE HOUSE OF TROY

(La Casa de la Troya)

BY

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AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION
FROM THE SPANISH BY
MRS. EMMONS CROCKER ✓



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218 2

THE TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Only the favored few can travel to see other lands and how the people live in them; still fewer are those who are able to spend the time, even though they be so inclined, to sojourn long enough with the people to learn how they live and what they think.

"The greatest study of mankind is man," is a true saying which in its broadest sense means much. Is there anything more broadening than finding out the customs and ideas of a people very different from ourselves, whether better or worse? We may not care to adopt their ways, and yet it is a poor country and a vile people indeed in whom another cannot find a kernel of grain by sifting away the chaff; neither has any people reached that stage where there is no chaff to be sifted away.

Aside from seeing the people and living among them, is there any better way to become acquainted with them than to read their best literature?—in the original if possible, if not, translated into a tongue we can read. We cannot all give attention to foreign languages, because, if we occupy the limited amount of time allotted to this life with other things, there is none left for this fascinating study.

Here is a book depicting college life in Spain, by one of the best Spanish authors, which has received a prize from the Royal Academy, proving that it is of merit in the eyes of the highest Spanish authority; and the fact that it has already run through eight editions in its short existence is assurance that it is very popular in its native land.

The scene is laid in Galicia, the northwestern province of Spain, and abounds in entrancing descriptions of that unrivaled corner of the earth, the Switzerland of the Iberian Peninsula. On this account, considerable Galician

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dialect is used in the book, but is necessarily lost in the translation, which is a pity, for some of their words are so very sweet and musical and expressive of great tenderness. I hope that my readers may trace Gerardo's journey from Madrid to Santiago de Compostela and his trip from Santiago to Túc, on the map, because it will mean so much more to them, and, I trust, there may be some among them who will be inspired to visit this territory not only rife with picturesque scenery, but teeming with historic associations. It was from La Coruña that the "Invincible Armada" sailed in 1588 to conquer England.

College life in Spain is very different from college life in the United States. How interesting to note the difference! Nor is there more difference between the college life of the two countries than between other parallel walks in life. Particularly marked is the contrast in the intercourse of the two young peoples. In Spain, a young man may not call on a young lady or rarely—*never* unless a friend of the family, some member of which must always be present—when he has seen her and thinks that he fancies her. [We are inclined to wonder how he comes to the conclusion that he does fancy her without an opportunity for more intimate association.] He begins his courtship by walking up and down the street in front of her house. Whether she makes her appearance on the balcony or not seems of no great moment—certainly not in the first stages—; the young man is not easily discouraged. His ultra mark of attention is to bring his guitar and play and sing under her window in the evening, either alone or accompanied by friends. Letter writing is also permitted. In an advanced courtship, the two sometimes converse through the grating of a window on street-level.

Spanish names are queer to those not accustomed to them; a person uses two surnames—both his father's and mother's—sometimes connected by "and" (*y*), though more frequently not. An example of each form is to be had in the names of our hero and heroine: Gerardo Roquer *y* Paz—Carmen Castro Retén. What impresses us as the strangest of all is that the father's name follows the christian name or names and the mother's comes after it, so that the last word of the series is not the family

name, as with most peoples. The young lady, among English speaking people, would be Miss Castro, not Miss Retén; the man, Mr. Roquer.

When a woman marries, she retains her own name, simply becoming the señora of her husband, as; Doña Carmen Castro de Roquer or La señora de (of) Roquer.

Christian names are used much more than with us. It is not disrespectful for a young person to call his elders by their first names preceded by Don or Doña.

These rules apply to all Spanish speaking countries.

I once met a Chilean who, after a short acquaintance, asked me my name. I was puzzled; but, thinking that he had forgotten, I answered: "Mrs. Emmons Crocker"—as he inquired for the purpose of directing a letter. "Oh, no!" said he: "that is your husband's." "Marion A. Crocker" I corrected, a trifle annoyed, feeling that he was taking too many liberties. "No; that is your husband's; what is your *own* name?" I insisted that Marion A. Crocker was *my* name, not my husband's. "Did you marry a-cousin?" he persisted. Then it dawned upon me, that he meant my maiden name. He could not comprehend when I explained that married women in my country discard their maiden names and that it would not be good form to use my father's name instead of my husband's in addressing a letter to me.

May this charming little romance in its Galician setting prove interesting and pleasing to those in search of a novelty!

MARION A. CROCKER.

THE HOUSE OF TROY

THE HOUSE OF TROY

I

The stage-driver, a short, fat man with profuse whiskers of many shades, came out of the stage-coach office with a big mail-bag which he hung from the rack of an enormous coach and then, making his way again through the crowd which surrounded "The Carrilana," gave the unwelcome cry:

"All aboard!"

Among the groups surrounding the coach, there was great confusion, as the newspapers say when they describe the days of crises in Congress. Those who were departing hurriedly said their farewells and climbed into the coach, resigned to the seven hours of imprisonment in store for them.

The greater part of the travellers were students who were going to seek their degrees in the Compostelan lecture halls of science and become great physicians, modest apothecaries, or humble lawyers. Although they regretted that the day had come to put an end to their happy summer vacation, no one appeared sad. They had all made up their minds to continue their good times in the shadow of the University.

Not being in the mood to enjoy the effervescent spirits of those who were to be his fellow students at college, Gerardo settled himself on the narrow seat of three places in the back of the berlin. No one had come to bid him good bye nor did he have an acquaintance in La Coruña, where he had remained hardly twenty-four hours, nevertheless, he felt as depressed on leaving this pleasant city as if he had spent his whole life there; almost as homesick

as when he had torn himself away from his beloved Madrid two days before; the pain of a young girl at the door of a convent which she has been forced to enter against her will. This comparison was brought to mind by the presence in the berlin on the seat with him, of two sisters of charity who responded to the brief salutation of the afflicted student with a "Good day! God bless you!" Gerardo was grateful for this silent companionship which relieved him from the annoyance of conversation during the journey. Since he left Madrid two nights before, he had spoken to no one, unless it had been absolutely necessary. He was possessed by an angry spirit and shunned human society, even after the sedative of hours, those magic pacifiers, had been converting his fury little by little into a great and resigned sadness.

When the clock on the coach-office building struck twelve, the stage-driver crawled up onto the box; at the same time, the postilion, a bold country lad, airily mounted at a leap, one of the horses in front and "The Carrilana" started violently with creaking of old iron, a volley of oaths and the sound of merry tinkling bells. It seemed to Gerardo as if he were leaving a part of his very being behind him in this unknown city. Those rails of the railroad, which could be seen from the heights of Monelos, terminated in Madrid! . . .

The sunny street of San Andres; the wide blue bay; the feracious gardens on the other shore; the beautiful river of Burgo; the imposing majesty of the ocean; the ships gleaming in the sun; the Tower of Hercules which almost came up out of the sea, like a hope or an adiós; the solitary castle by the river . . . to all these beautiful scenes which rapidly passed from vision, Gerardo bid farewell with a profound sigh that he could not repress and which made the nuns look up from the prayer-books, they were reading.

"Are you ill?" enquired the older.

Gerardo thanked them for their interest in a courteous reply and settled himself back against the seat. He watched the development of the landscape with sullen eyes that had no look of gratitude for the view of the Valley of Barcia dominated by the carriage-road as it climbed the mountain-

side in capricious zig-zags which delayed the separation from this enchanting sight.

At the Mesón del Viento, a country inn, he got down to stretch his legs while the coach-horses were being changed. The vivacious passengers of the middle and forward seats also got out and with much laughing and chattering went into the dirty inn filled with flies, which offered to wayfarers antediluvian sausages, moldy sardines, bread that had at sometime years before been white and a delicious light wine from Rivero, whose aroma, flavor and freshness disguised the century-old filth of the glasses and mugs in which it was served.

Gerardo did not go into the tavern, but remained outside walking up and down the road. The old, blackened, country houses and the (according to him) nasty, gloomy people who go into and come out of them, inspire an unconquerable repugnance. How can any one live behind these stones when there are bricks and adobe, white-wash and brushes in the world to make houses habitable? he wondered. Thinking of Herod, he looked with loathing at the bare-footed, frowzy-headed children, dirty as pigs, swarming in the highway, as if he had never seen their like in the slums of Madrid or among the middle class or even in the best quarter of the city.

Meanwhile, the students ordered things in the inn with much seriousness and great shouting in unintelligible languages.

"Espiniquilinguilis, madam?"

"Alterum nom loedere sausageorum?"

"Mother, are they English?" asked a little twelve-year-old girl of the inn-keeper's wife.

"Probably. I think they are hard tickets. Call your father. The Lord preserve us from these scalawags!"

"Yes they are, Señora, indeed they are! You better look out for them," agreed a young college boy who kindly offered his services as interpreter between the innkeeper's wife and his companions.

When the stage-driver again called: "All aboard!" they all rushed out of the tavern like a pack of demons and jumped into the coach.

They had not finished reseating themselves, when the

innkeeper's wife ran out of the door crying: "My bread! . . . My sausages! . . . They stole my bread an' my sausages! . . . Hay Manoel! . . . Manoel! . . . Hay Manoel! . . . Hay! Run! They've stolen our sausages! . . . Haaay Manoel! . . ."

"Hay Manolá!
Hay Manolá!"

began singing the college boys in "The Carrilana."

All out of breath, the furious woman reached the coach door which, in vain, she tried to open.

"Look out! The stage is going to start!" sweetly and gently admonished the student interpreter who was sitting near the door.

"Scalawags! Thieves! And you are the worst of the lot!" screamed at him, the innkeeper's wife.

"Who, I? Why, Señora; what do you mean?"

"Scapegallows! Scapegallows!"

"But wasn't I the one who told you, you would have to look out for these fellows? I warned you."

"Hay Manoel!" screeched the woman to a fat man in his shirt-sleeves, who appeared down the road running or making an attempt to run. "Hurry, hurry! These scalawags have robbed us uv our bread and our sausages!"

He dodged into the tavern and came out again clutching a big club, but his heroic effort proved useless, for at that moment "The Carrilana" pulled out and although Manoel and his better-half tried to follow it, it was impossible to keep up and they had to content themselves with hurling insults at those in the berlin, accompanied by a general chorus of the neighbors who had hastened to the scene on hearing the disturbance.

"Those thieving students!"

"Scalawags!"

"Blacklegs!" yelled Manoel shaking his cudgel, "I'll give it tuh yuh!"

"I'll give it to you'
I'll give it to you!
You wait and see!"

rode away singing the young devils in "The Carrilana."

"Now yuh see!" screamed the angry tavernkeeper's wife to her husband. "If yuh'd been in th' house as yuh'd ought tuh, Yur cussed old cards The devil take those damn school boys; God forgive me!"

"Shut up, woman. What'd they steal from yuh?"

"They carried off two big loaves on me and besides, fourteen sausages that were hanging up here!"

"Th' good uns?"

"What man! D'yuh think I'd be hanging the good uns up here? No, man, no. They were th' last o' th' uns made o' th' ol' hog 'at died on us las' spring. May they croak like 'im!"

"Ay, that's good! What'd they pay yuh?"

"They gave me two dollars and sixty-five cents for twelve little glasses o' *Rivero*, three *jaseosas* an' two beers; they bought two dollars' worth o' sausages an' a dollar's worth o' bread."

"Tush! woman; let'um go! We made five dollars off 'um."

"But, if yuh hadn't been playin' yuh cussed ol' game o' cards, instead o' tendin' tuh yur business as yuh'd ought tuh, we'd ha' made more."

Meanwhile, far from the conjugal conflict that it had left behind at the tavern, "The Carrilana" proceeded at good speed along the highway, followed by a rabble of dirty, ragged children who ran untiringly for an unbelievable distance, begging pennies from the travellers.

"Throw me a penny! Just one little penny, Señorito!" The whole chorus whined the petition indefatigably, without slackening their pace.

"Throw it! . . . Throw it! . . . Throw it! . . ."

As no one took any notice of them, they added: "Aw, go on! Throw us one an' we'll sing a song."

"Throw us one!"

"Throw us one!"

And so they went on, mile after mile.

Little the passengers in the stage-coach cared about the song.

Started by one of the students, who had been attacked

by a strong fit of conscience, a great discussion arose about the sausages *acquired* in the inn.

"It amounts to a robbery," declared the budding canon. "I think it is wrong for you to eat them. You ought to send them back. It is a matter of conscience."

"Eh, driver! Stop, I want to get out for a matter of conscience. . . . You see? He doesn't think it matters. It is impossible. *Ad impossibiliam nemo tenetur*. Also in the University we have our Latin. No one is obliged to undertake the impossible; as the matter stands, it is impossible to restore the sausages, *ergo*. . . ."

"I deny the fact! I deny the fact! You cannot return them to the innkeeper, but you can abstain from eating them. Give them to a respectable person to distribute among the poor."

"And this respectable person; is it you?"

"I could be the one. My character . . ."

"Well, your character isn't going to have a chance to taste this rich sausage, because as you have so many scruples. . . ."

"Ah, ha! Didn't I go to the rescue notifying the innkeeper's wife, that she would have to look out for you?"

"Well, at your notification we went into the house and she was saved."

"So, we are absolved beforehand."

"I?"

"Oh! there is no sausage."

"Then . . . (Singing)

Since you are pardoned,
I pray that you remain."

(General Chorus) "I thank you, Señor!
Then, let us eat!"

"The deuce! How stupid we are!" exclaimed one.

"What's the matter?" asked the others.

"We forgot the wine."

"That's so."

"The dickens! We did."

"No maledictions. Don't worry about a little thing like that, for I am here and with me these three little ones,"

said the student with a conscience, drawing from under the seat three bottles of *Rivero*.

“Good for you!”

“Bravo!”

“Long live our friend in need. But listen . . .” said one, extending a frightened hand towards the bottles, “are those from there?”

“They are.”

“Then you mustn’t drink any. Give them to me. It is another matter of conscience.”

“Why not? It was I who told the tavernkeeper’s wife to look out, so I didn’t pretend to be any holy father of the church. She ought to have looked out, therefore, it is just the same as if she had made us a present of them.”

It had been gradually growing cloudier and cloudier and at Órdenes, it began to rain, sprinkling at first and then raining harder; every now and then, there were hard showers all the rest of the way, and, between times, a heavy mist or a thick drizzle.

“It is plain to be seen that we are approaching Santiago de Compostela,” murmured Gerardo pulling up the coach window, to distract his attention from this horror.

Rain without truce, implacably falling upon Santiago, so a friend had told him, and boredom and gloom, they had informed him at La Coruña, were the undethronable monarchs of Compostela, was all the information he had about the city where, by the imperative and inexorable paternal mandate, he was going to remain for eight eternal months, struggling with detestable *laws* which to him were entirely indifferent. Why did his father insist that he should finish his course? Why did he wish it? Was he not wealthy? Well then! he thought.

The rich—as had said many times, Antonillo, the gypsy, who, although a guitar player, was a deep thinking man—ought to have no other occupation than spending their money, that the poor might live.

He remembered hearing Antonillo say: “There are many trades and one is t’ let th’ chink God gives yuh slip thro’ yuh fingers an’ run far, so’s it may ketch up wi’ th’ poor. He who keeps a dollar tied up is a thief and a rascal.”

The gypsy philosopher could find no blemish on his character if he examined it. For two years, since his father had been called to Paris on business, Gerardo had remained in Madrid pursuing his study of law, under the vigilant neglect of one of his uncles, where he had done nothing but spend money and amuse himself. Without being exactly a libertine, he was *a young man of the world*, as such youths are called by professionals who live on them.

Alone, free, young and with money, Gerardo spread his wings and flew. After the departure of his father, he did everything, but study. The truth is that with so much dancing and gambling, so many dinners and bull fights, keeping so many appointments with actresses, etc., etc., he could hardly find time to fulfill his social duties and attend his club meetings.

Although the allowance made to him by his father was liberal, without being sumptuous, it was not sufficient to enable him to lead constantly such a life of dissipation, consequently our friend became entangled in the nets of some *kind* señores who were glad to accommodate him at an exorbitant rate of interest, on the expectations of his maternal inheritance which would come into his possession when he attained his majority the following year.

Lastly, Gerardo had let himself be courted by *Mañitas*, a second soprano at the Apollo Theatre, who had just succeeded in landing at a jump among the lyric stars of first magnitude, by piquantly playing the rôle of *Mostaza* in "The National Follies," one of those shows which attain a great success by patching together five or six scenes, with tons of electric lights and ten miles of percaline and leg-show, etc.

The boy became crazily infatuated with *Mañitas*. He was "simply stuck on her," according to the young lady; I do not know with how much right she made the claim.

"How men get taken in!" sneered a señorita of the chorus.

"Or get married!" responded her companion at the left.

"The same thing," retorted the other.

But one fine morning, Gerardo's father appeared in Madrid without announcing his return, the result of which was that, on that very same afternoon, the twenty-ninth

of September, his son set out for Santiago de Compostela to conclude his law course in that University, chosen on account of its remoteness from "La Corte"¹ and because the peace and quietude of the "city of stone" (so Don Juan assured his son between severity and affection) would be the best medicine to cure him of all his evils and convert him into a good man.

"With your follies you have jeopardized your mother's fortune, God bless her! or at least a good part of it," reproved his father. "I have acquitted all the claims against it with my own means, because I wish to deliver it to you intact on the day you become of age; but, I also desire that when you receive it, you shall be a sensible, upright man and not one foolishly ruined by gambling, bulls and women."

Before the words of his father, Gerardo bowed his head, but resolved to return to Madrid immediately. Don Juan, a man of executive ability, made preparations for the journey in an incredibly short time, hardly giving him time to bid good bye to a couple of friends whom he happened to meet on the street. By one of these comrades he sent a message to *Mañitas*, telling her what had befallen him and begging her to come to the station to say adiós.

A short time before the departure of the Galician Express, his friend arrived with word that *Mañitas* excused herself on the pretext that she had a rehearsal.

"But is it true?"

"See here, my boy, why inquire into the matter? I do not know whether she had a rehearsal or not, but I have just seen her riding in a hansom with the Marquis of Morrones and talking to him in her sweetest manner; he is so rich, that, as the chorus girls say, 'he is lousy with money.' She is in great luck; isn't she?"

"The infamous creature!" roared Gerardo. And then, with all the aggregate experience of his twenty years, he proclaimed in his most depreciatory tone: "They are all alike!"

"Oh, but he won't stick to her."

He had his plan. His father was going to accompany him as far as Baños where he would take the express to

¹La Corte, a name frequently given to Madrid, meaning the court.

return to Paris. Gerardo had made up his mind to get off at Palencia and board the first train returning to Madrid, to revenge himself on that vile female.

Don Juan must have divined his intentions, because hardly were they settled in their compartment before he began telling him of the precautions he had taken in case he should go back to Madrid without his permission; he would be arrested and taken to Santa Rita, that horrible house of correction for incorrigible youths. Then he changed his tone, substituting affection for severity, and spoke to him gently, sometimes as to an unruly child and then again as to a serious man from whose manhood he expected more than from all possible threats and combinations.

Gerardo submitted and when his father asked him to give his word of honor that he would obey, he gave it sincerely.

Don Juan pressed his hand: "Well, my son, that is sufficient, because you are an honorable man. If you have been somewhat wild, I know that it was not through innate wickedness. Now I will confess that I gave no warning to the police to arrest you. I did not care to descend to any such means, because I was confident that you would give me your word to obey like a dutiful son and I would rather have that than all the signatures by which men secure their business contracts. Your honor guarantees me the fulfillment of my wishes which are for your good. . . . And above everything, I have confidence in your good and loyal heart which is not culpable. . . . I am the one to blame; I should not have left you alone, abandoned you to the inexperience and vivacity of your tender years. Will you pardon me, my son?"

How could he disobey?

And here he was in that diligence, on his way to a town which he detested before having made its acquaintance.

He was suffocating. He asked permission of the silent sisters of charity to open the window which he had previously closed. "It is so hot in here. . . ."

The landscape appeared infinitely dreary that rainy night. The solitary green fields seemed a somber green. The houses by the wayside looked as though they were

hermetically sealed. The highway was deserted. It had the semblance of an abandoned country. The fog enveloped everything, obliterating the outlines of the houses, swallowing them. Occasionally the coach would pass a peasant muffled in his *carrik*,¹ holding over himself an enormous red umbrella, as he trotted along on one of those small, sturdy, country horses which are capable of travelling so many miles in a day.

Night closed in and all was a blank; there remained only the sarcasm of the stage-coach bells and the squeaking of the wheels and axles. One of the creaking, country carts passed in the obscurity and filled the air with its sharp, disagreeable noise. It was like a desperate groan coming from the bowels of the earth.

All of a sudden, passed before the berlin window a row of lamp-posts then a hermitage, followed by two convents, one opposite the other and, a few steps beyond, a small church. The diligence made a swift turn and descended a steep, narrow street at the end of which and closing another short street, stood the historical monastery of Santo Domingo; presently it crossed in front of the Enseñanza; went past the Madres Mercedarias almost immediately and, a minute later, came to a full stop.

A crowd of people with umbrellas or wrapped in water-proofs, jostled one another in their attempts to get near to the coach door, some calling by name some traveller invisible in the obscurity of the diligence and others shouting the names of primitive hotels offering problematical rest to tired bodies.

“Fonda Suiza!”

“Vizcaína!”

“Carrilana!”

“La Estrella!”

A number of women barefooted and barelegged, with skirts turned up half way to their knees, furiously waving the pads which they were going to place on their heads to prevent the luggage they were soliciting from hurting them, screeched desperately at the passengers offering their services as porters and fighting to get the baggage which they were carrying, while an old policeman without being

¹ Carrik, a kind of cloak made of straw.

able to prevent the harassing clamor, was struggling to restore order, taking care that they did not run into the open umbrella which he was carrying.

"Señorito! let me carry it," they continued as insistent and sticky as flies.

Gerardo permitted a young boy to conduct him to an inn which he recommended as the best, through a fine persistent rain, stumbling along under dark porticos and crossing narrow streets lighted only by the dim and infrequent lights of the few stores.

"Why do they not light the street lamps?" he inquired of his guide.

"Because there is a moon."

Our ill-tempered friend was on the point of hitting the boy, believing him to be making fun of him; but the child hurried to explain that, according to the contract of the Company with the city, it was not obliged to furnish lights when a moon was marked on the calendar.

"Although it rains as it does tonight?"

"This is nothing. It usually rains pitchforks."

"A great town! A fine place for a University! Whoever could study in a hole like this?" muttered Gerardo: "And the inhabitants are a sight to be seen."

At the inn, a large-sized boarding house with the pretensions of a big hotel, a strapping, barefooted serving maid pitted from smallpox, showed him to a small, dirty room.

"I wish a better one than this," said the student in an irritated manner stepping out into the passage-way, "the best there is."

"Ay, Señor!" replied the astonished maid-servant, "And this one that you have?" And then she began to inform him that those of the very best families had occupied it and found no fault.

"But have you a better one or not? . . . If you have, show it to me, and if you haven't . . ."

"Oh yes, Señor, yes, I have. Mercy! don't fly into such a temper; it is no killing matter," hastened to say the servant. And glancing at him rather distrustfully, she added: "But the cost . . ."

"I did not ask the price," cut in shortly Gerardo.

She took him to another apartment, a little sitting-room with bed-room pretentiously furnished in the fashion of fifty years ago, without taste or comfort. Nevertheless, the proprietor and servants of the inn prized it highly. Gerardo accepted it with that resignation with which, since he said good bye to his father, he had managed to submit to everything, and let himself fall onto the sofa that creaked even under the light weight of the desperate student.

Then, when the maid and the porters who brought his baggage, had gone away, he closed the door and, feeling that painful impression of loneliness, abandonment and isolation which the cold, hostile rooms of inns and boarding houses produce, he went to the balcony, opened it and peered into the darkness.

It looked out onto a narrow, short street. It seemed as if one might touch the balcony of the house on the opposite side of the street by simply stretching out one's hand. In reality one almost could. It was still raining. A gargoyle was violently vomiting forth onto the street an enormous stream of water which fell with force upon the pavements, producing a sad, monotonous sound. The clock in the nearby cathedral slowly and gravely let fall upon the city the sound of eight sonorous bells; then, a smaller, nearer bell struck the hour and a huge figure enveloped in an ample cloak stopped at the corner.

"Brothers!" cried he with a powerful voice; "repeat a *Pater Noster* for the soul of Don Alonso de Fonseca, benefactor of the city!"

And in the distance a painful, feminine voice drawn out into a long, sad cadence, a cry that seemed more a call of anguish: "Whoooo waaaants oooyoysters?"

Gerardo slammed to the window, threw himself face down upon the bed and burst out crying like a child.

After eating a light supper alone at the extreme end of the long table, in order to be as far away as possible from a group of commercial travelling men who were arguing at the other end, our young man feeling the horror of solitude and inaction, put on his mackintosh and went out for a walk. After a few steps, he found a street with arcades and sought their protection. Under their shelter,

were wrangling some students and, walking slowly up and down, were a few grave señores conversing in a low tone, killing time till ten o'clock, supper hour in Santiago de Compostela.

Gerardo went the length of the thoroughfare in five minutes counting the stops he made to look at, without seeing the displays in the shop windows of the silver-smiths full of saints, rosaries, filigree, hammered trays, all beautiful works of art from the hands of the skilful Santiagoans, and the time spent in buying a novel (the first one he came across) in the book-store kept by a very talkative native of Cataluña, who tried in vain to draw him into conversation. Then he went into a café, one typical of the provinces with its divans in their worn-out upholstery of faded velvet, its dirty mirrors covered with pink gauze and its walls adorned with inferior paintings reproducing pictures well known to their student patrons.

At that moment, it was almost devoid of customers, except a few peaceful and silent chess players and some noisy domino fiends who slapped down their counters in the most objectionable manner, pounding the marble-topped table till it seemed as if it were in danger of flying into a thousand pieces at any minute.

"I put a six here!"

"Here's one that eats yours!"

"That's a whale of a play!"

"Take as many more as you like, my boy! . . . Domino!"

The idle waiters were standing familiarly around the table, interested in the game and discussing the plays; but Gerardo did not have to call to attract the attention of an alert serving-man of bold manner, bright eyes with an expression about them, which showed that he was up to snuff, and a thick moustache like those worn by the waiters in Santiago long before their companions-in-calling of Madrid decided to adorn their upper lips with such hairy decorations.

"Coffee, no . . .? Black?"

"With milk."

"Very well. Rum or brandy . . .? I will bring it at once."

The thoughts of the youth flew to Fornos, his Fornos, where at that hour, as was their custom, his friends were preparing for their nightly round. From the depths of his oppressed chest, he heaved a profound sigh and again felt a childish inclination to cry, but the presence of the waiter who had brought his coffee, filled his cup and remained standing by the table, made him refrain.

"Why do you wait?"

"To have you ask me questions," answered the unfazed waiter. "You are a stranger from Madrid; this is the first time you have ever been in Santiago; you are not acquainted with anyone; you wish to inform yourself about many things, because you are bored, therefore you will question Rafael who knows everything."

"Well Rafael is mistaken," made answer Gerardo with acerbity which he corrected immediately, to the waiter psychologist reader of stranger hearts. "I neither desire to talk nor to inform myself about anything; nothing which could happen in this town could interest me. . . . But how did you know that I am not acquainted here and that I come from Madrid? . . ."

". . . And are a law student very much vexed that you were forced to come to Santiago? Well, look you, Señorito, the last, I knew, because you were so ill-tempered when you spoke to me; that you came from Madrid, because you take your coffee with cream; that you are a law student, because you are so well dressed (those of medicine and pharmacy don't think about their clothes . . . as a rule, they are very negligent, eh? But they study more.) The rest, I could guess by your manner and the way you spoke."

Let us say in honor of the perspicacity of the waiter, that our celebrated friend, Sherlock Holmes, had not been born the night on which this conversation took place, or, at least, the news of his birth had not reached Rafael.

"Have you ever been in Madrid?" enquired Gerardo.

"No, Señor; but one of these days, before I get too old, I am going there to run around for a week or so. . . . They do a good deal of running around here too. . . . And besides . . ."

"Here?" exclaimed the astonished student.

"Yes indeed! You are surprised; it is plain to be seen. Everyone is when he comes here for the first time. He thinks it isn't possible to have any fun in Santiago.

"With this rain, these dark streets and in this dreariness?"

"Notwithstanding all this, Señorito. Dreariness there is, it cannot be denied, also water falls from the sky in abundance, but to be cheerful, it is sufficient to have cheerfulness within yourself. When you are content, you can laugh even if the stones of the cathedral are blackened by a month's rain; in spite of the dark streets. It is very pleasant here after a little spell of clear weather, when you have become acquainted with a pretty girl. The lack of lights in the streets is due to one of the councilmen trying to cut down expenses."

"Does it always rain like this?"

"Much more. Today is nothing, a mere bagatelle."

"And is it true that it lasts many days in succession?"

"Yes, there are times when it rains steadily for a month; sometimes longer. But we don't mind it; the first few days are very disagreeable; then you get used to it."

"Never!"

"Bosh! You are young and when you are young you can adapt yourself to anything and everything."

Students began to come in and they greeted Rafael with effusive handshakes, cries and gesticulations.

"Hullo! divine Rafael, waiter without equal, Providence of dead-broke students!"

"How are you! Rafael, good Rafaeliño; you can serve us tonight without fear that we shall not pay."

Some holloed as they sat down, to the chess players: "Ah! you are still at it. Is that the same game you were playing last June when we went away?"

Others surrounded the domino table, the four best players of the locality adding their voices to the students'.

An old man lame and almost blind, wearing the proverbial straw cape of the Galician peasant, entered with a pack of papers under his arm; pounding the floor with a big walking stick, he called in salivary tones: "The Cyclone! The Galician Gazette! with the latest news from

Madrid and Barcelona. The Dominical Free Thought Weekly of Madrid! . . .”

“Hullo, *Foursticks*! Long live the clergy!”

“Oh, g’wan an’ study, yuh scapegraces! Rascals!”

“Ho, *Foursticks*! they saw you playing cards with the canons yesterday.”

“Aw, git out! Curses on yuh! Mind your business!”

“Give me The Future Century, *Foursticks*.”

“I’ll give yuh a crack o’ th’ pate. The Dominical! The Dominical! The Dominical!”

Gerardo bought a local paper, the first one the old man handed out; one of those ingenuous provincial sheets, printed in big type, full of printers’ errors and half filled with advertisements and petty local news. “Yesterday the seats in the Alameda were painted green.” “Beginning tomorrow night, the big bell of the Cathedral will ring the Angelus at eight o’clock”; little notices which savored of the archaical to the bored youth from Madrid, but which are most pleasing to us and almost bring tears to our eyes, so vividly do they recall the familiar scenes of our childhood in a small country town; retired soldiers slowly promenading up one of the long avenues of the Alameda with the seats newly painted, talking of the injustice of such recompenses in the year of the Nana; the canons pompously fluttering their robes through the most lonely paths they could find, sheltered from the north wind, gossiping about intrigues and favors; solemn professors discussing politics as they sauntered down the central walk where, also, strolled the members of the court and the judge wearing the same dignity as if he were on the bench, talking, like the retired soldiers, of the injustice of promotions, of intrigues like the canons and of politics the same as the professors.

Gerardo disdained the local news and turned to the “Latest by Telegraph” and became deeply interested in a declaration by the President of the Senate, which he did not understand, but which interested him simply from the fact that it was news from Madrid.

By this time, the café was filled with loud talking and laughing. The new comers were being saluted from fifty

seats. Questions, welcomes, jokes, news and prognostications about the scholastic year which had been solemnly inaugurated that morning.

"They say that Ramiro is fiercer than ever."

"Oh pshaw! Beside Varela he is a dove."

"Maximino isn't coming back till next term. He has gone to Madrid to take notes in the criminal court."

"You don't say so! We are also in good luck: India has claimed Romero. . . . Who will be his substitute?"

"Cagarolas."

"You were in the inferno."

"Yes, and do you think that I am going to be reading the same story all my life? I must have a change, my little saint. This year I am going in for *Roxiña* Laureles who didn't have any use for me last year."

To Gerardo, all this noise was very disturbing, so he called the waiter to pay him.

"You know, Señorito, that, when you want anything, you have Rafael who is true blue, always at your service and he can make himself useful in everything."

In going out, our friend ran against a student who was coming in; a tall individual of jaundiced complexion, with a round face, fierce curly hair and big eyes.

"Pardon me," said Gerardo.

"Are you a student?" asked he who was entering.

"Yes, Señor."

"Then, I excuse you, boy."

Without doubt, he was very popular among his fellow students, for, from the door, Gerardo heard him being welcomed by those in the café with great demonstrations of joy and affection.

"Madeira! Madeira!" cried a dozen jubilant voices and as many more shouted: "Madeiriña! when did you climb onto the earth?"

It was a traditional joke often sprung by the college boys, which sometimes ruffled the tempers of those to whom it was directed, although neither he nor those springing it nor the demon who invented it, knew what it meant.

"What's the matter with this *push*?" responded Madeira shaking hands and embracing his comrades. "Rafael!

Rafael! Come here, phenix of waiters; Madeira brings a fresh supply of money and is going to pay you. . . . Yes, truly. What do I owe?"

"And what did you make it?"

"Oh, if you haven't it, it doesn't matter; let the account run till next year; it will be all the longer."

"Not so fast, man! I have it all figured up."

"Oh, you shouldn't split hairs over money matters. What do I owe you?"

"Nineteen dollars and forty cents."

"Thief! Police! Would you believe it? Nineteen dollars worth of coffee!

"Ah, no, Señor. Sixteen dollars and eighty cents for coffee and the rest is . . ."

"There, take it and be quiet, mathematician. He who haggles over such matters is a paltry fellow. Keep the change for your fee."

"Many thanks, Señorito Madeira. When you like, we will begin a new one."

"May the devil eat me if it is before day after tomorrow!"

"Where are you staying this year, Madeira?"

"At the Casa de la Troya (House of Troy)."

"At Doña Generosa's? Good enough! You were the only one who was lacking there."

A night watchman in his slow, measured gait, wrapped in his weatherbeaten *carrik*, his hat pulled down over the back of his neck, with halberd under his arm, passed by the door, clattering his wooden shoes and calling the hour in a prolonged, sad tone.

"Ave María the Purest! Half past ten and raining!"

That night, Gerardo dreamt that he had died of grief and that he was being carried in a funeral procession through narrow streets filled with furious domino players. In front of the hearse, which was the great bell of the cathedral, Rafael and Madeira arm in arm were leading the way, dancing under a big red umbrella. Now and then, they stopped to cry in a loud voice: "Brothers! Here we are carrying Don Alonso de Fonseca! He died from indigestion caused by water!"

And an interminable file of night watchmen headed by *Foursticks*, followed behind the bell, responded entoning a strange, sad response of an absurd miserere: “Whoooo waaaants ooooysters? . . .”

II

The cloisters of the University were teeming with animation on that first morning of the academic year. Forming lines at the foot of the columns, seated on the stone benches ranging along the wall, walking through the cloisters or loitering in the patio, the students were cheerfully chatting.

At the door of the hall destined for the first-year classes, the freshmen, a trifle embarrassed, formed groups and looked with a certain envious respect upon the members of the other classes, especially the sophomores, whom they took to be seniors, on account of their disparaging air of superiority. The students raised their hats respectfully to the professors as they went from the faculty room to the general assembly hall where, until the bell sounded the hour to don their togas, they, also, formed groups according to their affiliation with university politics and eyed one another jealously out of the corners of their eyes.

Sobre Rivas, the beadle, was answering as shortly as possibly a torrent of questions, in a very gruff voice, with which, doubtlessly, he wished to sustain a certain superiority necessary, in his opinion, to preserve the order from which no one ever thought of deviating.

With great repulsion, Gerardo addressed himself to Rivas, as soon as he was inside the building. Our friend had a faculty of coming to conclusions at a glance, and, from the moment he laid eyes on the edifice, he termed it "the ugly and detestable, old, black rookery," notwithstanding the severe and pleasing simplicity of its neoclassic outlines which later generations of antiæsthetics and absurd reformers had defaced. And the cloister caused a still worse impression, in spite of its grace and elegance that he could not fail to recognize. "Huh! those intercolumns open to all the inclemencies of the weather," he muttered.

Ah, the cloisters of the University of Madrid! . . .

Certainly, for obscurity, narrowness and bad smells, they

exceed the passage ways of a cheap boarding house and are adequate to receive the small stream of daily science that the official wisdom presents to university youth; but, at least, there, the cold and the rain do not have entrance as to this cloister, at the time, illuminated by the sad, pale daylight of Compostela. . . .

Oh, for the cheerfulness, the light and the little milliners, above all the little milliners, of that wide Avenue of Saint Bernardo! . . .

And what could he say of the abomination of this paved patio with the horror of that half always deprived of the sun, completely covered with copper which some dare-devils were using as a coast at the risk of broken bones, that divine Providence reduced to heavy falls on their posteriors, provoking clamorous laughter, screams and whistles?

"Where are the fifth-year class rooms?" asked Gerardo of the beadle.

"Are you an alumnus?" interrogated in his turn Rivas, according to the Galician custom of answering a question by asking another.

"Yes, Señor."

"And a new-comer, I can see," replied the perspicacious functionary. "You are too late for the first class. I advise you to look out, because Don Adolfo does not excuse cuts. Now you may go into number five with Don Servando, afterwards with Señor Peña and then into number four with Don Angelito Pintos."

"There are no classes in the afternoon?"

"No, Señor. It is not the custom here to have classes in the afternoon; they all come in the morning. They begin at eight and are out at two. You can see the schedule on the board over there."

Posted on a column opposite the entrance and defended by a screen from the bold, vindictive hands of the student body, was the list of lectures giving their hours and rooms and the names of the professors in charge. There was a crowd of heads bobbing up and down trying to get a sight of it, but only those in the front row were able to read it.

Gerardo waited patiently until the crowd dispersed. Near him, Madeira was talking with a tall, thick-set young

man of merry countenance easily provoked to laughter, ornamented with an incipient moustache.

“What did you pay for all your books?” Madeira was asking.

“Twelve dollars and ten cents.”

“Augusto, Augustiño! If you, who are always so kind and accommodating will give me your word of honor to lend me yours in May, when I ask you, I will save my money and we will go to the “Crechas” for a treat of oysters and cutlets. I have only about six dollars left, anyway.”

“No, Madeira, no; then you will lose them or hock them as you did last year with the ‘Penal’ and I shall find myself black in the face with studying for ‘exams’ at the end of the year. Why don’t you take your board money and add it to what you have and buy a set of books?”

“Why do they ever give you that vile Boullosa to study, when you just carry the books to your room and never look at them again?”

“But, if you don’t study, why do you want the books?”

“No, I shall not study; but I like to have the books to prove to myself what course I am taking.”

Augusto did not give attention to Madeira’s answer. He had heard the new student seeking information and hastened to give him all the explanations he required—and more. Augusto was a good fellow with two manias: that of being useful to everybody, and that of getting acquainted with every stranger as soon as the new-comer set foot into the town and before anyone else had had a chance to speak to him; especially if he came from Madrid, his acquaintance constituted for Augusto an imperative necessity, irresistible if the stranger were fashionably dressed and had polished manners.

Never an actor, artist, officer nor person of distinction stopped over in Santiago de Compostela, with whom the officious young man did not become friendly at once, so he prepared immediately to make friends with the new student in whom his unerring instinct divined a Madrileño¹; but Gerardo, after having thanked him courteously for his information, left him, to walk alone in the cloister, trying

¹ Madrileño, citizen of Madrid.

to pass away the time by reading the inscriptions over the doors of the different halls, proclaiming the merits of some of the illustrious sons of the University.

"Who is that 'type,' Augustiño?"

"I don't know yet, Madeira. He must be one of our classmates. . . . But there is nothing of a 'type' about him," replied Augusto, quick to defend the stranger. "You, as soon as a fellow arrives well dressed and clean, you call him a 'type' and won't have anything to do with him and then you wake up and find that you are in bad, as in the case of Manolo Casás, who, with all his elegance and neatness, proved to be more popular than you. . . . But, now that my attention is called to it, it seems to me that you, yourself, have come back a prodigy of elegance. My goodness! Not a wrinkle; not a spot; all the buttons. . . . Madeiriño! When did you climb onto the earth? How is this?"

"Why man! we have entered upon the dignity of the fifth year and . . ."

"Madeiriño, no prevarications. In this elegance of yours, there is something more than that."

"*Caramba!*¹ I suppose I have to let the cat out of the bag. . . . Luisa. . . ."

"That's so; your girl in Vigo. Do you still go with her?"

"To the end, which is going to be a wedding no matter what happens. . . . And if they tease me, and they will as soon as I give them a chance. . . Madeira in love is an absurdity; isn't it? I, who never had anything to do with such foolishness, which seemed to me ridiculous! Well, Madeira is blindly, stupidly in love. I don't tell anybody; but I am crazy about her. You are the only one I would think of talking to about it, because you are the unique person who would listen with patience. . . . And you, you rascal—it is because you have such a passion for novels."

"No, it is because I am sympathetic and have patience. . . . But I can tell you, that some of those stories are mighty interesting, just the same. . . . But there goes Don Servando to the class room."

"How tiresome the first days of the college year are!"

¹ *Caramba!*, a very common exclamation.

They entered the hall. Don Servando was carefully and smilingly examining the students as they came in, with his fun-loving eyes hidden behind his spectacles, while his fingers played with the goatee that gave character to his face. Don Servando was an odd man, a type apart in this institution of routine and formalities. He always went to class with his cape which he wore with great distinction, thrown gallantly over his shoulder. He had two abhorrences: conventionalities and the decisions of the Supreme Court; and one occupation: ridiculing all the law books which fell into his hands, not excepting his own. Outside of that, and inside too, he was a thoroughly good man of much knowledge and an authority on judicial matters.

As soon as the students were seated, he began the roll call. Gerardo improved the moment in inspecting his fellow class men. The hall was not very different from those of the University of Madrid, nor the occupants with juvenile faces bearing witness of health and cheerfulness; various modes of dress, some neglected and some showing extreme care, some indescribable; a few formal men seemed somewhat out of their element.

Don Servando made a joking commentary from time to time on the names, as he was reading them.

"Baamond López, Don Marcelino. . . . Your uncle, the rector of San Fiz, charged me to make you study. . . . Bah! You are young; study is for staid old men. Men should not go to college till they are forty-five years old. . . . Very well, we will tell your uncle that you are studying. . . . And you must not permit me to tell an untruth."

When he arrived at the name of our hero: "Roquer y ¹ Paz, Don Gerardo," and as he stood up to answer the professor's questions, all eyes were turned in his direction.

"You are not of this University; are you? From which one do you come? . . . But sit down . . . if you are not comfortable on your feet."

"I have studied in Madrid, in Granada and in Valladolid."

"'Have studied.' . . . I hope you may give proof of it. You have made a number of changes. I shall be much

¹y, and.

pleased if you get along well in this fish-pond. But, bah! you probably do not know anything yet."

He finished the list, wiped his glasses, held them up to the light, squinted at them, returned them to his nose, cleared his throat, laughed and said:

"Señores. . . . I ought to make you a florid address like those which are being made throughout Spain at this hour by my distinguished brother professors . . . the sun is shining brightly and you, doubtless, are desirous of promenading in the Alameda. . . . And I also: (A pause; a laugh). I have assigned you the text of Rodriguez and Gomez, because it is the least poor of all those of the writers on the subject and writers on it are many. . . . But I am going to give you a piece of advice: (Another pause and another laugh) do not study it. You have probably looked into it and have said on hearing my counsel: 'That is one of Don Servando's jokes!' No, señores. Two alumni may come in to be examined; one may stand struck dumb; the other may repeat the words of the text book very well, very well indeed; I may give excellent to one and flunk the other. . . . Did you make a remark? . . ." directing his question to Gerardo.

"No, Señor."

"But you thought it. You are mistaken. I suspend the one and pass the other, because the one who has *not* studied *that* is in position to learn a case when it is assigned to him, but the other has his head so full of this stuff that it is impossible for him to know anything about 'Mercantile' in all the days of his life. Ha, ha! God be with you. Till tomorrow."

"What lesson shall we bring you?" enquired a long-haired grind.

"Any one you like," laughingly replied the picturesque professor.

"There's an odd stick for you, this Don Servando"; said Augusto to Roquer, with whom he cleverly managed to pair off in going out; "but he is a good old soul. He never asks for the lesson and passes everybody. You are from Madrid, are you not? We come from the same place."

"You, also, are from Madrid?" questioned Gerardo

whom the idea of fellow-citizenship humanized a bit. "I should not have known it."

"Yes, the Galician accent has glued itself to my tongue; it is so sweet, the rascal! And besides, I have been in Santiago for six years. I came when I was thirteen, at the time my father was made colonel and sent here as chief of this zone. . . . Let's go for a walk in the Herradura¹ till the next class. You will see what a beautiful promenade it is. And we will talk about Madrid. That is to say, you talk to me about it, because I, as I left there so young, know only the streets. . . . But I am very well informed concerning the life there, through the newspapers and novels, of course. I read a great deal."

They started through a narrow street called "calle de la Calderería,"² at that hour, filled with peasants dickering in shrill voices with the merchants from their doorways and threatening to be off with their produce for which the shopkeepers were haggling to get better bargains.

The painful feeling of oppression and suffocation which Gerardo had experienced the evening before, was accentuated in going through these streets whose rows of houses seemed to be throwing themselves at each other across the narrow space, in an attempt to crush unfortunate pedestrians.

At many of the shop doors were displayed crudely colored cloths and handkerchiefs, before which stood groups of country men and women handling the goods; instead of giving a tone of cheerfulness to the street, according to Gerardo, the picture with its irony of gay colors, the striking reds, yellows and greens, produced a dolorous atmosphere.

"Are you contented here?" he asked of his fellow-citizen.

"Why man! I am always hoping to return to Madrid. It is true, I feel choked here."

¹Herradura (horseshoe), the name of an avenue in the shape of a horseshoe, nearly surrounding the woods of Santa Susana; one end of it begins at the gate of the Alameda and the other comes into that beautiful park about midway.

²"calle de la Calderería," the Street of the Braziers (Braziers' Street). In Spanish the word for street (calle) is not begun with a capital, as in English.

"I can well believe it."

"But my parents like Santiago very much."

"Were they born here?"

"It is almost the same to my mother as if she were, because she is a native of Padrón, a dear, little village about three miles from Santiago; still, my father is the one who is so taken with the place, although he is a Madrileño, like me. You couldn't get him away from here."

Then, Augusto began to talk about University affairs. The institution was run by a few families having a political pull, so he informed his companion; a professor would get an appointment for a son and maybe for a son-in-law, to strengthen the family hold. The Dean, brother-in-law to the Treasurer, had a nephew employed as Secretary; and so they were interrelated; an outsider could not get in there. Augusto did not know how it happened, but, whenever there was a vacancy on the faculty, it was always filled by a son, a nephew or a grandson of someone.

They had arrived at the Herradura which was and is, thanks to God, a wonderful promenade presenting a panorama of magnificent views. At first, the road submerges itself in the woods, as it climbs the hill, and all the way borders, with its inside curve, the noble oaks of the Santa Susana Woods; soon, picturesque landscapes are descried through the openings; as it reaches a higher elevation, the town appears in the background of the picture, like a spider, extending its long arms through the suburbs; above all, with the City Hall at their feet, dominating, symbolical, soaring above the rest of the buildings, like a lord over his vassals, the imposing towers of the Cathedral; by its side, the University with its hundreds of windows, pompously occupying half the city, and next to it, the Franciscan Monastery hiding silently and humbly in a hollow, the fruitfulness of its enormous garden where were swarming the brown-frocked monks making the steel of their hoes flash in the sunlight as they moved them incessantly up and down. Beyond, farther down, near the little stream, ostentatiously called a river, are the extensive barracks lodging four companies and a chief. Here and there, clustered around the Cathedral, the University and the Monastery, are the dwelling houses, some white-washed with a

dirty white, others exposing their large, square, dark stones. The whole town bristles with the bell-towers and weather-vaned steeples of its hundred churches. The ringing of the bells, reinforced by guns from the barracks, celebrating the festival of some saint or other—which celebration takes place almost every day—made the air resound.

There it was! the odious place enveloped in its mantle of sadness, with its old, black stones, its roofs covered with copper and steaming humidity, its narrow, somber streets, the boredom of its petty, monotonous, provincial life subject to the annoyance of a thousand reverential civilities and insupportable points of etiquette peculiar to itself. Gerardo viewed it with intense hatred.

Eight months! To be obliged to remain in that place eight mortal months!

The humility of the outlying districts of San Lorenzo and Carmen, scattered among corn fields and oak groves beyond the city limits, seemed to Gerardo abjectness. Why didn't the inhabitants of those sordid hovels rise up like beings with some manhood in them and raze the town, beginning with the University?

As the road advances, the view is intercepted by the bare massiveness of Monte Pedroso (stony mountain) which elevates its head aggressively cutting off the horizon, as if it had been put there to impede the flight of thought. Gerardo's irritation against the city, against the inhabitants and against the somber shadow which there imposed its presence, reached its height. . . . But when, farther on, Augusto made him sit down on one of the stone benches, and he cast his ireful eyes over the beauties of the fields on the way to Noya, let them rest on the wonderful gardens of the insane asylum at Conjo, and followed the peregrinations of the delightful Pontevedra highway and reposed his gaze upon the dense forest of Castiñeiriño, his spirit gradually became more peaceful and his anger was softened into a resigned melancholy, in appropriate harmony with the landscape spread before him.

"How beautiful it is!" exclaimed Augusto after a long silence spent in delightful contemplation of the glory of the scene.

Gerardo was obliged to confess that it was truly pretty and, for the first time since he had left "la Corte," he did not miss a single corner of Madrid; but still with a pang of homesickness, he asked:

"Which of these roads that we see, goes to Madrid?"

"No one of them, directly. I think that you would probably get there more quickly by taking the highway to Orense. I walk out in that direction often when I have a particular longing for Madrid. I am in the habit of taking long walks for exercise; I sometimes go a league and, you see, with my weight. . . . But I like to do it, because it brings me that much nearer my native town. The worst of it is coming back—that tired feeling, and worse than that, the rage at not being able to keep on to my beloved Madrid. Wouldn't you like to take a walk out that way this afternoon?"

"No, pardon me. . . . I thank you very much for your kindness, but my state of mind makes a bad companion of me. When I have gotten over it somewhat, I am sure, we shall be good friends. Now, I am not master of myself. I feel positively sick and prefer to be alone. I have left my life behind me in Madrid."

"Caramba! my friend, the best thing to stave off sadness, is good company. But, bah! it will wear off in a few days. Everyone who comes to Santiago feels like that at first. You will find that you will get used to it after a while. And after all, when you know how to take it, it isn't so bad here."

At that moment, Madeira came around the curve with some friends.

"Ah! Augusto, Roquer!" he cried. "It is time to go to class. This is Peña's hour."

They all started towards "the detestable, old, black rookery," as Gerardo had named the University. On the way, Augusto questioned his new friend about prominent persons of Madrid whose names he constantly read in newspapers and periodicals—Echegaray, Cánovas del Castillo, la Montes, Gayarre, Moreno Nieto, Zorrilla, Palacio, Valdés, don Pedro Antonio Alarcon, Calvo, Vico, Péres Galdós, the Emperor of Brazil, etc.; about Congress, and other important matters; but, alas! except singers, actors and

actresses, and bull fighters, he hardly knew one, even by sight, and some, not even by reputation.

"But, what do you do in Madrid?"

"Have a good time."

On reaching the University, they found a congregation of students near the entrance, sitting on the steps, on the posts of the balustrade and standing about; one set noisily applauding a little fellow at the head of a group ensconced on a window balcony at one side of the door of "the hall of learning."

"Again, Nietiño! Come on, Nietiño! Sing it again!" they shouted.

"Do you know? the scamp has got a new song, an awfully funny one, and we have just been singing it. Come on, you're a wonder at high notes!" called one of them to Augusto.

"Yes, I know it," said Augusto, "he taught it to me last night. With your permission, Roquer."

He jumped nimbly up onto the balcony to mingle his fine tenor voice with those of the singers directed by Nietiño. Much to the amusement of the boys below, the faculty and the persons attracted by the song to the windows of the neighboring buildings, they prepared to repeat the absurd words fitted to an arbitrary bit of music.

"At first, *piano, piano*, a few strains which promise a sentimental song and then, all of a sudden, an explosion:

Three big dogs
make one *real* ¹
and one little dog. . . .
For three little ones
capital ²
capital
capital
Pretty capital. . . ."

All the students joined in the chorus:

"Three big dogs ³

¹ Real, a small piece of money. Pronounced *rā-äl'*.

² "Capital," the Spanish pronunciation is *cap ē täl'*.

³ The Spanish have a coin which they call "*perro grande*," big dog, and another, "*perro chico*," little dog.

make one *real*¹
and one little dog. . . .”

Rivas, the Beadle, appeared in the doorway and wasted his lung power shrieking:

“Señores, to class! The professors are waiting! . . . Señores! . . . To Class! . . . Señores! . . .” And finally retired in discouragement humming:

“Three big dogs. . . .”

¹ “Real,” pronounced *rā-äl’*, also a Spanish coin.

III

The third day, Gerardo stopped going to the University. His fit of the blues was becoming worse and worse and he shunned all society, not getting up till noon and, sometimes, later. He ate alone in his room, going immediately to the Café del Siglo (Century Café) where he worried down a cup of *chicory*, reading the Madrid papers, and before the students began to come in, he would go for a walk.

"You ought not to keep to yourself as you do, Don Gerardo," said Rafael to him one day. "You will end by making yourself sick."

But he gave no attention to what Rafael said to him and went to walk in the Hórreo (Granary Street). He liked the solitude of that street where he met only peasants who saluted him respectfully with the traditional courtesy of Galicia. "Good day! May God and the Virgin bless you!"

Generally, he went as far as Santa Lucía or even farther. He was becoming a great walker. As soon as he left Santiago behind him, he felt much calmer and he found the delicate softness of the green fields very restful and soothing. In coming back, he formed the habit of sitting down on one of the projections of the little stone bridge, not so much to rest as to put off his going back into the city which seemed to him each time more repugnant.

He felt an ardent desire for Madrid; all Madrid, without regard to any particular spot, thing or person in it; simply an overwhelming longing to get back to it once more, that was all. The rest—city, friends, amusements, even Mañitas, herself, whose memory at other moments was a bleeding wound—were jumbled together in this craving just for the place, itself.

At night, he shut himself up in his room and read till morning. The bookseller, Galí, had found in him an excellent customer of all things pertaining to Madrid—novels, satirical periodicals, bull-ring news, light romances and

other forms more or less literary—fuel thrown onto the fire of his desperation.

One night after supper, it occurred to him to write to his friends at home, telling them his troubles, but, when he had the paper before him and the pen in his hand, he could not think of one among his companions of the *happy life*, with heart enough to comprehend them and not laugh at his misfortunes.

Then there came another annoyance; he found that there were others who sought to avoid acquaintances by taking their daily exercises on the Hórreo. First, a man about thirty—having the general appearance of a much older person—tall, with black beard rather unkempt, well-dressed, who went along without taking any notice of anything, looking up at the clouds, like a dreamer. He always came back intoxicated and invariably singing in a hoarse voice, but in good style, the inciting phrase with which, in Massenet's opera, Manon conquers, in San Sulpice, the resistance of Des Grieux:

“La tua non e la mano che mi tocca . . .”

Besides the dreamer, there came a gentleman of advanced years and military aspect, with thick, white moustache and side whiskers, leaning on the arm of a very distinguished-looking señorita, tall and slender, with heavy chestnut hair, a round face and rosy cheeks like one of Raphael's virgins, divine mouth with pearly teeth, aquiline nose and soft brown eyes, to whom Gerardo took an instant dislike, according to his wont of passing judgment on everything and everybody at first sight.

The old man and young girl, undoubtedly father and daughter, were both dressed in mourning which she had begun to lighten with touches of white.

The first afternoon that Gerardo saw them, they came and sat down on the little stone bridge opposite him. The elderly gentleman was fond of the view down the viaduct of Cornes and spent a long time pointing out the beauties of the little valley to his daughter, about which sang the divine Rosalía:

“Among stones barley,
Among furze bluebells,

Among mosses violets
 You glimpse between the curtains.
 Down the river it is beautiful.

* * * *

Up the river or down the river
 All is calm, flat country."

The presence of these newcomers greatly vexed Gerardo, and, on seeing them, he used to hasten his step to lose sight of them as soon as possible. The elderly man and his daughter particularly got on his nerves.

One afternoon, bluer than usual, he did not feel like walking, so he sat down on the bridge wrapped in his thoughts. So abstracted was he, that he did not see the old man and his odious daughter sitting in their customary place nor should he have been aware of their proximity had not the whining voice of an old begger all in tatters, her skirt half way up to her knees, a ragged scarf on her head, and a staff in her hand, recalled his wandering senses by her insistent pleading for alms.

"Señoritiño: just a few pennies. . . . Give me an alms for the souls of your dead ones."

"God help you," acridly responded the disturbed thinker.

"Señoritiño! A little charity for the souls of your dead."

"Pardon me!"

"Look, if *she* should ask with half the necessity, never would you vex your voice as to me."

Gerardo turned his head without replying. Then her Gipsy blood surged through the veins of the mendicant—there is in that virile and astute race, humility and pride, resignation and aggressiveness—changing her tone and looking alternatively from the señorita to the young man, she cunningly made her demand:

"Give me something, then, for the sake of the gentle eyes of that rosy-cheeked one."—Turning towards the young girl—"Look at her, Señor! She is as pretty as a sunny day! She wants to be married soon! Give it for her and I will pray to Our Lady to send you good fortune. See how soft they are! Do Señor! give me a trifle for the

happiness of the little dove white as the snow and rosy as those clouds that go before the sun; she is as good as she is pretty and you two could be very happy. Come now! Isn't a maid as pretty as she, worth an alms, even if it be only a 'big dog'?"

Gerardo, above all things, was gallant and courteous; sowing his wild oats had not made him forget that he was a gentleman of noble birth. He handed a largesse to the beggar in compliment of the blessing, she was evoking, and, as was natural, turned to see the young lady, and saw, or thought he saw, her blush; at the same time, the father cast upon the mendicant an annihilating look which cut short her steps in his direction. The crafty one was probably bound to that port to repeat her fortune.

Shortly afterward, mentally cursing the beggar, Gerardo got up and went away, taking the road which goes up the little hill of Castiñeiriño, without giving further attention to his neighbors on the bridge. That was the last straw; to think that anyone could wish him to marry here. The idea of his marrying a Galician!

This incident raised his bad humor to the highest pitch, and when, at night, he returned to his rooms, he resolved never to set foot into the street again, but remain in them till he died or until he was permitted to quit this place where life was such a burden, the young girls so detestable and the beggars so bold and impertinent.

The idea of his marrying! And marrying a Galician!! And a Galician of Santiago de Compostela!!!

He let himself fall desperately into an armchair and began to turn over the leaves of some illustrated magazines which Galí had just sent in to him. All at once, in one of them, he ran across a large, colored picture of Mañitas, in which the traitress appeared dressed. . . . Well to describe her as dressed is somewhat of a euphemism; but how shall we speak of the wisp of tulle which was adorned by the beauty of the soprano? . . . Let us say: "She was dressed. . . ." Mañitas was flaunting all her inciting beauty before the public. ALL. She reserved nothing except that which would have prevented the circulation of the periodical.

"There is a piece of female beauty! That, that is a

woman for you and not a simpering thing like the one on the bridge this afternoon!" ejaculated Gerardo, holding up the picture at arms' length in front of him.

A big lump came up into his throat almost choking him, and he began to sob.

"Have a heart! A little charity!" he implored in a pitiful voice looking at Mañitas with supplication in his eyes, which quickly gave place to odium and ire.

Suddenly he became livid and with the impetuosity and vehemence which were his strong characteristics, he jumped up and seized the stiletto which served for a paper cutter and jabbed at the picture violently and vindictively. . . . And the traitoress, Mañitas, lay upon the table stabbed through her opulent bosom.

Then the assassin, with that calm ferocity of hardened criminals, took the scissors and cut to bits that pretty face and inciting body; so fine did he cut them that a jury could not have identified the corpse.

The assassination consummated, Gerardo went to bed without his supper. He passed the night and the next day in bed in a state of high fever. The following morning found him free from fever, but so weak that he did not feel able to go out. He sat down in an easychair with his back to the window balcony and prepared to pass away his life groaning and smoking.

But in the middle of the afternoon, came an energetic rapping on his door and before he could answer, it was opened by Augusto Armero, who stood an instant taking in the situation and then smilingly and resolutely crossed the room and cordially shook the hand of our sad hero.

"Why, what is the matter? I went to the Siglo this afternoon and Rafael told me that a boy from the inn said you were sick. I left my coffee half drunk and ran up to take care of you. When I arrived out of breath and inquired below about you, they informed me that you had had a fit of blues which grew worse and worse, till you shut yourself up in your room, refusing to see anybody. I said: 'Probably bent upon dying of the great sorrow of his twenty years.' Nonsense! Nobody dies here! It would be an awful bother in the middle of the month to have to practice a miserere and get up a funeral wreath

with a sentimental inscription: . . . 'To Gerardo Roquer, who died of boredom. His disconsolate comrades.' Come, come! See what a beautiful day it is (opening the shutters to let in the sunlight). Put on your clothes and come for a walk."

"No, no. I will not go out," answered Gerardo grateful for the affection and interest shown by the officious youth. "I don't want to see anyone."

"Why not? Of course you do, everyone! Do you know what they do in America with homesick Galicians? They play the guitar and sing to them till they have to dance. I can't play the guitar for you to dance; among other reasons, because I don't know how, but I will learn, if necessary."

Gerardo effusively pressed the cheerful, kindly boy's hand. "Thank you, but do not insist. I cannot go out."

"Yes, you must, because you need to. You are sick and haven't any family to take care of you. Very well, I represent your family. You need the medicine of fresh air, sunshine, exercise and conversation and I come to administer them, ordering you to go out this very minute, as your father or your mother would."

"I haven't any mother."

"No? Then I will be a mother to you. Get up and come out; don't refuse to take your medicine."

The stricken boy still resisted, though feebly; but who could hold out against good fellowship. He thanked his interest and praised his kind-heartedness.

"Oh, don't you think you are going to get out of it that way. That doesn't count. As you have no other friend. . . . But if you had made any friends, they would all come to see you; in Santiago all the college boys are good-hearted and whenever one is sick or needs anything, they all help him out."

Gerardo slowly began to dress himself.

"Hurry up, hurry up! They are not going to do anything to you out in the street. I have an idea! I am going to drive away your homesickness with a piano, which, in this case, will make a very good substitute for a guitar. I will introduce you to some pretty girls."

"Oh, no! Anything but that! The walk will be enough. I will go anywhere you like, except on the Hórreo."

"Very well; we will go to the Camino Nuevo (new promenade) which is the fashionable promenade at this season. No one goes for a walk on the Hórreo, except people in mourning. If they are on the balcony, you will see some mighty pretty girls in the houses back of the Pilar. You, what you need is a girl. . . . Caramba! What a lot of books you have here! . . . You must lend me these novels; will you? Those, I haven't read?"

"I will give them to you."

"Well, think what you like, but I will accept them without making any bones about it, for a book is the very best present I can have. And these illustrated periodicals; may I take these too?"

"Yes, everything."

"You're a great boy! I'll grab onto these five."

At the door, they met Rafael, who had come to see the sick one, improving an hour when there were not many in the café.

"You don't know how glad I am to meet you coming out. What you need, Señor Roquer, although you deny it, is companionship; leave this inn and go to a students' boarding house."

"A boarding house?"

"Yes; Rafael is just right," said Augusto enthusiastically. "At the inn, all by yourself, you will never be able to pull yourself out of the blues, which will seriously affect your health, but, in a boarding house, with a lot of jolly fellows, you will have to pick up your spirits."

Between the coaxing of the waiter and the commanding of the student who refused to leave him, Gerardo, in a weak moment consented, and Rafael was commissioned to find a suitable place for him.

Still, rendered suspicious by his uncomfortable, dirty quarters at the hotel, Gerardo opposed his last objection. Would it not be worse in a boarding house?

"For what you pay at this hotel, and for even less, you can live like a prince in a boarding house."

The next afternoon, the active waiter notified him, that he had found a fine place, a large sitting-room and spacious

sleeping-room with a wide window in it, and all for a peseta less than at the inn.

"Where?" inquired Augusto.

"In the Troya, at Doña Generosa Carollo's house."

"Oh, at 'La Casa de la Troya' (The House of Troy). Good!" And the fat boy began to shake with laughter.

"Don't you think I have made a good choice?"

"Indeed, you have. It will be the very best thing in the world for him to go there. Listen, Gerardo, the biggest rascals of the University live there. All boys of good families; I didn't mean that, but the biggest set of scamps! You will get over your blues there all right! You wait and see! Besides, Doña Generosa treats her boarders so well. Any man who is lucky enough to get in there, keeps his place for the whole course. Gee! but she has the hand for making custards and whipped-cream desserts and knows how to cook tripe."

"And why do they call her 'la Troya'?"

"They don't call her 'la Troya'; that is the name of the street where the house is. We have a great way of making ellipses here; whenever we speak of a street in the city, we say: 'la Troya, la Azabachería, el Preguntoiro for calle de la Troya (street of the Troya or Troy Street), calle de la Azabachería (Jet Workers' Street), etc., as we have so little to do, and the distances are so short, well . . . to make the way shorter and leave time for everything."

Gerardo liked the house very much, although it was not luxuriously furnished, far from it, nor even tastefully, but there was something hospitable and cheerful about it, in distinct contrast to the gloomy inn. And still more than the house, Gerardo liked the woman who kept it, a person with some degree of refinement, about sixty years old, who had, without doubt, been pretty, once, and yet retained her health and strength.

Doña Generosa, contrary to the typical boarding-house keeper, was agreeable, dressed in the style of Carmen, did up her hair in braids wound around her head, wore noiseless, cloth slippers and was very kind without being officious. The place gave him a more homelike feeling than he had experienced for a long time.

"Then you like it?" asked Rafael as they came out.

"Yes. There are a number of things lacking to make the rooms habitable, but I will buy those, and, tomorrow noon, I will take possession of my new quarters."

"It is Sunday."

"What difference does that make?"

* * * * *

Before leaving him installed in his new rooms, even if he did not like it, Augusto made Gerardo take a long walk all about the city, showing him the points of interest. He wished to have the newcomer hear the playing of the oboes in the Cathedral, the primitive and ingenuous music which accompanies the mitred procession that on festival days, passes from nave to nave, lead by the archbishop dressed in his pontifical robes, and the other six mitred dignitaries. He made him admire the figure of their patron saint, whose image adorns a huge incense burner, and repeated Victor Hugo's lines:

"Compostela has a saint
And the king of incense burners,
Which swing from nave to nave."

Then he took him to see the four magnificent edifices of the Hospital, which had not then been defaced by the bad taste of those who do not know how to appreciate and value the jewels of Compostela. They made the circuit of the Herradura and went twice up and down the main thoroughfare and, at noon, tired by the long tramp, but in good humor, they started for "la casa de la Troya," followed by the useful Rafael.

It was necessary to ring several times to make themselves heard, for there was the racket of two hundred demons inside, or a half dozen students, which is the same thing, with the balance in favor of the obstreperous boys.

The maid-servant called out from a third-story window and opened the door by pulling a cord that followed the stairway, attached to the bolt:

"Who is it?"

"The new boarder," answered Rafael.

"I'm coming." This time, it was the voice of Doña Generosa.

"I must leave you now," said Rafael. "Good luck to you, Don Gerardo; until we meet again, Don Augusto."

"Why don't you come in?" questioned Augusto.

"I don't want them to see me, because they will want to borrow some money. When they are in such an uproar, it means that there isn't a quarter in the house."

"Down with Samoeiro! 'Death to the *Ostrogoths*!' " cried the voices of Doña Generosa's guests from the third floor.

"Pandemonium!" exclaimed Rafael, as he made haste to get away. "They are after Samoeiro. It is worse than I thought. Adiós, señores, adiós!"

And the serving man hurried down the street, keeping as close to the wall as possible, in order not to be discovered.

Doña Generosa came solicitously to welcome the arrivals.

"They are always up to some tricks here," she explained to Gerardo; "but they are all good boys, the Lord knows, and when there is a sick one in the house, which, thanks to God, there seldom is, you can hear a pin drop. They are just full of fun. At present, they are roasting Don Jesús Samoeiro; but he is made of good stuff and doesn't mind it.

"But when they began to plague the señor opposite, who is a little bit odd, because he complained to the police about their noise, he was afraid of them and they, the greatest jokers, made him go out onto the balcony regularly and were always after him: 'Don Egidio, you are two minutes late in going out!' or 'It is five minutes past the time!' Poor señor! I had to go to him, myself, and tell him not to mind anything about them."

Doña Generosa went on relating the capers of her boarders till she was called to the kitchen.

"Will you take soup or broth?" she asked as she went out.

"Broth," answered Augusto, before Gerardo had a chance. "Broth. You must acclimate yourself according to rule. Besides, I can declare to you on the faith of a ravenous Madrileño, that there is nothing better than Galician broth."

"Very well, then, for the broth! But, who is this Sa-

moeiro whom these wild animals that are going to be my neighbors, are crying after?"

"One of our classmates, a 'type,' a very celebrated one. He's a good fellow who has his peculiarities. He always dresses in the latest fashions, the most extreme and exaggerated; but he has no real style about him and doesn't know how to wear his clothes which he soon gets all spotted. He is very fond of the girls, but they do not care for him at all. He is always getting thrown down by the girls here and every one who comes to town, without learning from experience. He spends most of his time going around the streets serenading."

"And what has he to do with the Ostrogoths?"

"One day in history class, he was reciting about the 'Ostrógoths' and I corrected him in a low voice 'Óstrogoths, Óstrogoths'; he turned to me very seriously and said in an emphatic tone with the air of one being very sure of his ground, 'Ostrógoths, Ostrógoths.' 'Probably, you, yourself, are one of the *Ostrógoths*,' stormed the professor, so the nickname of *Ostrógoth* will stick to Samoeiro forevermore. Adiós, I must be off."

"Stay to dinner."

"And my girl! I am already in bad. I haven't seen her for two days and I usually meet her when the noon service is out at the Cathedral. We begin to quarrel at one and make up again at night. That is our regular custom. Adiós."

Gerardo paused at the door of the dining-room, curious and astonished. There were six or seven students who had corralled another, the only one dressed in an admissible manner. The rest. . . . One had on an old water-proof with a cape which he was dragging behind him; another was wearing a heavy winter overcoat with a hood and close sleeves—one of the short ones which caricaturists of that day often ridiculed—with his legs in red and blue striped underdrawers. He looked like a regular cut-throat. The rest were wrapped up in bed clothes, rigged on like dominos, which each wore with the dignity of a Roman toga or a scholar's gown.

"Samoeiro, worthy *Ostrógoth*!" cried one; "Cede or we shall declare you an enemy to the country!"

"Our enemy! We are the country!"

"'L'Etat, c'est moi!'" added Madeira, who exercised the monopoly of popular French quotations.

"Let me alone. I don't like joking," begged Samoeiro.

"It's no joke. The state is in danger; the country needs you, the country reclaims her illustrious son of the Town of Brollón."

"Give me my boots!" insisted the angry Samoeiro.

"Give us the suit and the dollar!"

"Doña Generosa!"

"Don't call a woman to your aid, coward!"

"Doña Generosa!"

"What is the matter?" Doña Generosa had come to the rescue.

"To the table,
To the table,
To the table!"

chanted the students at the top of their voices, to keep Doña Generosa from hearing the complaints of the *Ostrógoth*.

"You are always tormenting the poor Señorito Samoeiro! When are you going to be good to him?"

"When he is to us, Doña Generosa."

"Well, now behave yourselves for a little while; here is a new companion."—She motioned towards Gerardo.

"Ah! The Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, coming to live in this holy house?" interrogated Madeira, who proved to be the one with the overcoat and striped drawers.

"You are welcome. . . . Here he will lose that wise look which so disfigures him."

They all sat down to the table. A maid brought in a soup tureen brimming with broth. Then Casimiro Barcala, one of the most ingenious fellows and the one with the biggest moustache, native of Túy and a poet, addressing himself to Gerardo in a clear declamatory tone:

"You must know, most worthy sir, as you have had the good fortune to fall into this nest of eagles, the cause of the tumult which astonished you at your entrance. Behold here, Samoeiro! The Imbecile, Samoeiro! The tell-tale, Samoeiro!"

“Please do me the favor of not putting me in bad with this señor and stop calling me names,” interrupted the one to whom the allusion was made.

“Shut up, doltish *Ostrógoth!* Yes, most excellent señor, *Eminentissime atque reverendissime domine*, as the canons say at the beginning of a sermon at the Cathedral, misfortune has been following this illustrious company of which you will have the honor to count yourself a member. . . . See here, Manolito,” turning to one of the others; “don’t work so hard to get all the cabbage and leave nothing but the broth for the rest of us. Help yourself reasonably and if you should desire another helping, I am sure these ravenous creatures will have left some for you. Restrain yourself a little. If you do not, what will this respectable person who, from today, has the honor of sharing our broth and who is not yet acquainted with us, think of you?”

“As I was saying, my most respectable friend, for several days, adversity has been following this unlucky company. Sixty and two hours have been dropping away our effects. The metallic form was the first to go. The books of these studious young men, Your Eminence will have to seek at Don Nicanor’s, the Jew in the *calle de Ante Altares*, as well as the rest of the pawnable articles of these, your humble servants. Day before yesterday, when desperation had come to lodge in this house, there occurred to Manolito a happy idea: to pawn a suit belonging to one of us and remedy our condition.

“We drew lots. My clothes were the happy ones. I am left in my underdrawers. . . . What do you think that robber of a tailor gave for my tunic—a precious light blue? Three dollars and seventy-five cents, *Eminentissime atque reverendissime domine!* That didn’t help out much. Then Manolito had a second brilliant idea, the devil take him, to play at the Circo de Artesanos, which is not our highest-class gambling house, the three seventy-five from my suit. But what capital was that for a like venture? We agreed to pawn another suit. The lot fell to Julio Quiroga and we thought, we should make a good thing on that, but the saint had him completely in his power. Don Nicanor did not hesitate to take advantage of the situation and gave only a dollar and a quarter. Our banker soon lost the sum

from both outfits. It would pain your nobleness to hear how crestfallen we were. Madeira then proposed that, as a penalty, he would deliver his suit to Manolito and that he should go and risk what it brought at the Casino of the aristocracy. In twenty-two minutes José Madeira presented himself clothed as you now see him and placing his suit on the table said, in a cavernous voice and with a dignified gesture: 'Take this to the hyena in the Ante Altares.' . . . So that is the way it happened that we are all reduced to our underwear. Last night, not having anything to lay hand to, we smoked an old coat; that is to say, for an old thing that Nicanor wouldn't give us anything for, the servant girl here paid us a quarter; she is going to make her beau a present of it. And, today, we come to Samoeiro for help, that we may be saved.

"My dear friend, Samoeiro, here, is a phenomenon of elegance; more elegant than Pedrito Seoane who sets the fashion in this town and carries off all the hearts, both native and foreign, to the desperation of our deluded companion. Samoeiro has a magnificent wardrobe of three suits: this gray one which you see covered with grease spots, another suit without grease spots, because he hasn't worn it, and a Prince Albert, truly regal, that he had made in no less a place than Lugo. We have asked his help and the scoundrel has refused to lend us his swell suit to carry on a little business enterprise, and a dollar, so that the others can smoke and have a cup of coffee, while I go to try my fortune at the aristocratic Casino dressed in Samoeiro's new suit which fits me to a T, although I'm not hollow-chested like him. But he's a bad sport. . . ."

"I don't refuse because I don't want to be accommodating, but I have other reasons which they know very well."

"Listen to this for a reason! Yesterday Elvirita *Simpleton* . . ."

"I have told you before, that you needn't call her names."

". . . . looked at him sweetly and so he has to call on her this afternoon at the *Measles's*, some young ladies we call *measeles*, because they always take up with the first-year students and receive the most select on Sunday afternoons."

"Well, isn't that reason enough? I am not going to call in this coat that you make fun of."

"Go in the other, the Prince Albert."

"I have told you that I wouldn't."

"Well, my boy, if you go at all you will go barefooted and display the beautiful joints with which nature has endowed you, because we have taken the precaution of hiding your shoes. Now, I leave it to Señor Roquer y Paz to be judge of your conduct."

"And I too, Señor."

"Let us hear your judgment."

"Why, man, I . . ." said Gerardo good naturedly entering into the situation: "Let us see, Señor Samoeiro; what is your difficulty in dressing for the call? I think that a Prince Albert is the proper thing, and the young ladies will feel honored with this attention."

"Yes, man, yes," interrupted Madeira; "just the thing to make an impression."

"In Madrid, it is the custom," continued Gerardo.

"Maybe it is, but it isn't here."

"Well, somebody has to start it and who is a better one than the Beau Brummel of the Town of Brollón?"

"This isn't an appropriate occasion for a student to come out in a Prince Albert."

"Oh, you stickler! I see that we shall have to sell your shoes, so we can smoke, and it will be a long time before you can go out anywhere. Probably, the Señorita *Simpleton* will have to be deprived of your society for a month. Never mind! No doubt, she will thank us."

"Señor Samoeiro, I shall have to judge you as a poor sport and a bad companion," averred Gerardo.

"That's just what you are," agreed Madeira.

"No, I'm not either! I'll go in the Prince Albert."

"Bravo!"

"Long live Samoeiro!"

"But, I won't give the dollar."

"And how are we going to smoke and get our coffee?"

"Señor Samoeiro is right," affirmed Gerardo; "he should not be the one to concede everything. I will pay for the cigars and coffee and we will present a cigar to

Señor Samoeiro, that he may give tone to the *Measle* house. An eagle as great . . .”

“No, for goodness’ sake, don’t waste it!” cried Barcala. “He’s no eagle! He’s nothing but a sparrow; but on such a solemn afternoon we won’t worry him. Don’t you know that this extraordinary man doesn’t smoke? He just bites the cigars and throws the pieces to somebody else. Then again, it wouldn’t be worth while to waste it on the Señora *Simpleton*, for although she is Samoeiro’s best girl—according to him—I assure you, she’s not worth it. So it’s all settled; isn’t it, illustrious Brollonian?”

“Yees. . . . But there is another difficulty; my old silk hat isn’t presentable.”

“Yes, man, yes; it’s all right.”

“No it isn’t.”

“Wear your soft hat and overcoat and nobody will know whether you have on a short coat or a Prince Albert.”

“I haven’t any overcoat; they took my overcoat and pawned it, without asking me.”

“We smoked it night before last. But there is still a road to salvation; Javierito, who is almost as elegant as you, will lend you his stovepipe.”

“They won’t be able to see your eyes, and you’ll spoil the hat band for me; you’ll get it all grease.”

“Change it then and keep still. Everything is all arranged; you will lend us the suit, Javier Flama will lend you his top hat, Roquer will treat to coffee and cigars, I will put on this dirty suit of yours to go out on my errands, come back and disinfect myself and, by supper time, we shall all be happy.”

This program was carried out. That is to say. . . . When Barcala and Samoeiro were dressed and on the point of going out, there came a terrible doubt to the former. Supposing he should lose? How could he get more money from the *Ostrógoth*? It was a weakness to give in to him about the dollar. It would be wise not to let the Brollonian go out till he, himself, got back. Those demons put their heads together and quickly devised a plan. Casimiro said good-bye and went out without waiting for the *Ostrógoth*. They were going in different directions. . . .

"What a horrid necktie! That isn't the kind to wear with a Prince Albert. Get Barcala to lend you one."

"That's so. Go get me one."

"He keeps his ties locked up in a trunk. Hollo to him to give you the key."

Samoeiro innocently stepped out onto the balcony.

"Hey, there, Casimiro!" he called.

"What do you want?" shouted back Barcala as he was turning the corner.

But Samoeiro did not have time to answer. The windows were banged together, the shutters immediately closed and locked and the key thrown out the window to Barcala who had exacted this precaution as a surety, and so the *Ostrógoth* was left out on the balcony, dressed in an elegant Prince Albert, his greasy head topped off with a magnificent silk hat as shiny as a mirror, pounding on the window and yelling for them to open it.

Occupants of the nearby houses, attracted by the disturbance, looked out upon the scene with curiosity and amusement, while one of the college boys addressed them from another window of the boarding house:

"Ladies and gentlemen, servants and policemen! Come and see the caged wild beast, a real tiger, a Hyrcanian tiger from Brollón, captured in the deserts of Asia by an *Ostrógoth*. Come! Come!!"

"What a homely tiger!" shouted a street gamin, and threw up part of a head of cabbage at the furious Samoeiro, hitting him on the chest and making him growl like a real one. Then a shower of projectiles followed.

"My silk hat!" screamed Javier Flama from his window. "My hat! Take care of my hat!"

"Open the door!"

"You take care of my hat! If you let it get spoiled, I'll throw you into the river Prince Albert and all!"

"Stop these street Arabs, then!"

A shower of missiles continued to rain upon the tiger.

"If you let anything happen to my hat, I'll murder you!"

It was funny to see the *Ostrógoth* take off his hat, bend down his head and present his shoulders to the flying

débris, which proved a good mark till a servant of the house, aided by a policeman, who, by a piece of good luck, chanced to come that way, cleared the street of the ruffians.

What they could not do, notwithstanding his pitiful supplications, was to release the captive and there he had to remain from half after three in the afternoon till Barcala returned.

But friend Casimiro, before gambling with his small capital, went for a stroll on the Camino Nuevo and then through the Alameda and, after sunset, down the main thoroughfare—the three days he had been shut up in the house excused him—and did not come back till after he had lost all the money, which was at quarter before ten in the evening of the memorable day on which Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, went to live with the *locos*¹ in the House of Troy presided over by the good Doña Generosa Carollo, pattern of patience and flower of student-boarding-house-keepers.

¹ Locos, crazy ones.

IV

Gerardo liked it very much at *The House of Troy*. Doña Generosa took good care of him, and his companions, although they did not yet consider him to be quite one of them, treated him in a friendly manner. He continued leading the same life as when he was at the inn. He never spoke of studies nor classes. He arose about noon and went to bed toward morning. Afternoons, he took a walk in the Hórreo, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by Augusto who gave him detailed information concerning those whom they met, especially the three who had attracted his attention during those first days when he felt so blue.

The señorita was Carmiña Castro Retén, a member of one of the most aristocratic families in Galicia, a delightful young lady, one of the most notable beauties of that land of beautiful women, very pleasant and agreeable, and well educated, having been at one of the best boarding schools in Paris.

"And rich, oh boy! Her mother left her a fortune and her father will leave her more. You just want to set your cap for her."

"I am not at all interested!"

"You will never meet a better. You'd make a fine pair, man! You are tall and have a good figure; in fact, you have a very distinguished air about you, as Madeira would say, and that little black moustache setting off the sad expression which has not yet been wholly obliterated, gives you a certain romantic and interesting aspect. And, as to her . . ."

"Keep still, man!"

"No; what you need to bring you out of this, is a girl, believe me. And it ought not to be hard to find one in Santiago. All the girls here are crazy about you. I have told them all kinds of things. . . . But none of them can hold a candle to Carmiña Castro. . . ."

“Her father, Don Laureano, was a colonel, general or something, in the Carlist army, and is a great friend of Don Carlos. [The King.] There was as much political conviction as homage and friendship, in the stand he took. He is very highly respected in Santiago. He has an extensive estate near La Coruña in Betanzos, where they spend the summer. His wife, who died a couple of years ago, owned nearly all of Mahía, a place very near Santiago, and now it belongs to her only child, Carmen, or Carmiña as she is frequently called. Their town house is on the corner of la Esclavitude and el Faramello. The girl has never recognized the attentions of anyone, although she has had stacks of men after her.”

“Proud?”

“No. She is very proper and has never seen a man she cares about, so she is awaiting her fortune. I could swear that I had seen her look at you with curiosity, and, you know, curiosity in a woman is the beginning of, I don’t know what, I have read somewhere.”

“I have already told you, that I do not like her, although I cannot deny, she is pretty; and besides, I wish you to understand that I will never marry a Galician. The women of this part of the country are insipid and unendurable. Confess it.”

“Far from it, my dear señor! Instead of confessing to such a heresy, I loudly proclaim the contrary. And as to your other remark. . . . Men may forswear all delights, rather than that of a Galician marriage. There is an adage: ‘He who enters Galicia a bachelor, leaves it a married man.’ You just have to stay here a little while. When you go away, we will talk about it. Never a rat escapes.”

“Rats; perhaps not, but I am a cat.”

“Very well, ‘Thomas,’ we shall yet see you by a January moon miauling before the door of some pretty girl.”

“That will be difficult. For me, women . . .”

“Are you still infatuated with Mañitas?”

“I assure you, without realizing it, she has gone out of my mind.”

“Then, I snap my fingers at your disdain for the enemy sex.”

The story of the other person who frequented the road

was more amusing. His name was Lorenzo Carballo and he belonged to one of the best families of Santiago de Compostela. He had passed his youth there, dreaming of going out to enjoy the world. It hardly seemed probable that his passionate desire could ever be realized, considering the reduced condition of the family treasury which, although sufficient to meet the needs of his parents, his sister and himself, in the economical mode of living at Santiago, would not permit them to see the world, of which Lorenzo used to talk to his friends in such exalted terms.

“To live!” he would say, summing up in that one word, all his longings.

However, that which seemed impossible occurred. One day, a relative of the Carballos had the kindness to die and leave the fortune which he had saved by God knows how much hard work and how many privations, to Lorenzo and his sister; they each received several hundred thousand dollars. Needless to say, Lorenzo, as soon as he came into possession of his portion, hastened to realize his illusions. He disappeared from Santiago de Compostela and all that was known of him during his absence, was that he was enjoying himself and “touching the high spots”; which was later verified when he returned after having run through all of his share of the uncle’s property. It seems that he had had Boldini, the much coveted famous prima donna who made such a success that season of *Manon*, for his paramour, and she must have been madly in love with him, because, after Carballo’s resources were very low, they traveled about together till one morning, Lorenzo finding his purse entirely empty, left without bidding her farewell and came back to ask hospitality of his parents.

When the people of Santiago, astonished at all this, reprimanded his folly, he retorted with satisfaction, but in a melancholy voice: “I have lived!” And many of those who reproached him, from the bottom of their hearts, really envied the bird that had known how to fly to those heights inaccessible to them chained down to the perpetuity of a prosaic life.

“It is thought that the singer must still hold her affection for Lorenzo,” affirmed Augusto; “because he often receives letters and periodicals from the places where she

is known to be singing; and, one day when he was drunk, he let slip some words about the painfulness of their separation; a couple of inquisitive fellows got one of her letters away from him and it proved that Boldini is still dead in love with the poor chap."

"Why doesn't she have him live with her, then?"

"Ah! if he only would! . . . But above everything else, he sets his pride, and self respect will not permit him to live at the expense of a mistress; consequently, he spends his life here dreaming, with his eyes in the clouds, and, the days he receives letters from his impossible love, drinking himself into a state of forgetfulness."

* * * * *

It happened a few days afterward when Gerardo was returning from his walk and had nearly reached the bridge where Señor Castro and his daughter were sitting on their customary seat, that he ran across a strange group which had just come out of The Seca, a near-by tavern, composed of four boys leading Lorenzo Carballo, who was drunk, by a rope tied round his neck; he had a stick across his shoulders, with his arms stretched out on it and his hands hanging over the front.

"Dance, bear!" shouted the rascals, between outbursts of laughter. "Look at the bear, we caught in The Seca! Dance, bear, dance!" they commanded, pulling the rope.

The unfortunate Carballo, obedient to the voices of his tormentors, began to dance in a clumsy manner.

"Sing, bear!" ordered the brazen-faced villains.

Carballo, hanging on his stick, his face turned to the sky, and tears in his eyes, with a passionate and tremulous voice, broke into the song of *Manon* in San Sulpice:

"Negli occhi miei, si pieni un di d'incanto
Non brillan piu le perle del mio pianto."

"Scoundrels!" exploded the indignant Gerardo making a leap for them and grabbing the stick from under Carballo's arms, who deprived of his prop, fell to the ground in a heap.

The ragamuffins, in their surprise, momentarily re-

treated, but returned immediately to attack the student with fists and sticks.

“Ay! Carballeria owes me a dollar,” yelled the barmaid, rushing out of the tavern door; then, taking in the situation, encouraged Gerardo: “Give it to um, señor, give it to um good an’ hard!”

Blows were raining thick and fast upon the student. Gerardo remembered his fencing and parried well, dealing fierce blows to his opponents, so once more skill triumphed over strength of numbers and, although he could not escape being hit occasionally, his strokes were much more effective and had already stretched one upon the ground.

Don Laureano and his daughter watched the combat with natural anxiety. His fighting blood stirred within him, recalling the good, old times in the North and, moved by the impulse of a cavalier, the former soldier wished to go to the aid of the brave young man, and the señorita had great difficulty in restraining him.

“Let me go!” he insisted. “A gentleman is fighting four cowards. Give it to them, young man! Beat the scoundwags!” he cried brandishing his cane.

“Papa, for God’s sake!” supplicated the young girl, almost weeping.

Some women washing in the river began to scream at the hoodlums and throw stones. Seeing that the robust college man was being reënforced by the washerwomen and besides, just at that moment, a man ran out of the tavern with a club in his hand, the boys took to their heels. Gerardo hurried to Carballo and was bending over him when a heavy stone hurled by one of the fleeing cowards, hit him on the head and he fell prostrate.

Don Laureano hastened to his assistance, followed by his daughter, and reached him at the same time as the man coming from the tavern; he proved to be one of the medical students and recognized Gerardo who was bleeding profusely from a wound on the forehead.

“Some water and a handkerchief!” he called.

The señorita Castro Retén ran down to the river and wet her handkerchief, not minding the brambles which tore her dress, and with tender hands delicately bathed the laceration and wiped the blood from the maltreated youth’s face.

The freshness of the water, or perhaps the soft touch of those gentle hands, quickly brought Gerardo to himself; observing the face, and instantly taking in the situation, he exclaimed, smiling: "It is nothing!"

"Nothing," corroborated the other student; "merely a scalp wound." And placing Señorita Castro's handkerchief over the cut, he bound it on with Gerardo's, which he tore in two for this purpose.

"This is ridiculous," protested the Madrileño. "I am not going through the streets like this."

"If you prefer to go with the blood running down your face . . ."

"If there is no other way, I will wait till after dark, before going back. . . . But how about this poor man?"

"We will leave him here till he is sober."

"No," said Don Laureano: "It would be better to send a cab to take him home. I will order one."

The students and the señor Castro carried Carballo, who was snoring like a pig, into the tavern. The old gentleman bid the college boys good day, expressing the hope that the injury might not prove serious, and went out to look for his daughter of whom Gerardo, being distracted by the intoxicated man and nauseated by the concussion of the stone, had neglected to take leave. He even forgot to thank her for her gracious care. To be sure, he did not know, till told by the other student—who proved to be no other than the vigorous Juanito Ventosela, the terror of the opposing side in the class rushes in those times—the part she had taken in the dressing of his wound.

"Being here, why did you not prevent those ruffians from maltreating this unhappy creature?" asked Gerardo, after they had laid Carballo on a bundle of straw.

"Because, I am tired of always getting into fights. I have been five years studying anatomy with a cudgel instead of a bistoury in my hand and I gave my solemn promise to Don Maximino that, this year, I would turn over a new leaf and finish my course, so I wish to keep my word. Formerly, you know, there was hardly a day that I didn't get into a scrap. Now, it is at least a month since I have knocked out a tooth. Unless I am very much pro-

voked or see a friend in real danger, I keep out of it, these days.”

When the carriage arrived, Gerardo felt rather uncomfortable and after driving into town and making the exertion of helping the drunken man into his house, by the time he reached the boarding house, he was completely nauseated.

Ventosela insisted that he should go to bed.

The heroism of Gerardo—one against four, two of whom, they found out, were brothers of Paxaro Pinto, the baker in the Lagartos—dubbed him a knight of The Order of Troy. The House of Troy felt wounded, as if the stone which had split the Madrileño's head had hit each one of its occupants, and it was not two nights before they caught the baker who took his brothers' part, in one of the byways where he was watching for his girl, and cudgeled his ribs. Madeira, especially, laid into him. . . .

Gerardo could not complain for lack of care during the two days he was in bed nor the other two he remained in his room during *convalescence*. Perhaps he pampered himself a little more than necessary, but it was due to the insistence of his house companion, Adolfo Pulleiro, the silent Pulleiro, who was in his last year of the Medical School, and was the attendant physician. Gerardo was his first patient of importance and he gave him scrupulous care, neglecting none of the details which the medical professors, Don Maximino and Don Jeremias, recommended in such cases.

As long as Gerardo was ill, his fellow students of the house, took turns in playing nurse—the first night, they all sat up with him, as if it were something serious, and it was a wonder that, between the bad tobacco smoke and the foulness of the air caused by the lamp, they were not all asphyxiated—and, during that time, an undying friendship was engendered between them. There is no need of mentioning the fact that Augusto came to share the nursing with those in the house, sacrificing all his spare time which he usually gave to reading and his girl who was indignant at his preference.

Those hours of pleasant companionship and fraternity

proved the healing balm to the slight wounds of the young soul of the impressionable student.

While confined to his room, he received a letter from his father, notifying him, that the respectable señor, Don Ventura Lozano y Portilla, would henceforth have charge of his money matters and "keep an eye on him," while he remained in Santiago, and telling him to be sure to call on the old gentleman before it was time to go for his monthly allowance, and to treat him with the respect and consideration which were due the worthy señor. This phrase rather upset Gerardo. Why should his father, knowing his innate courtesy and good breeding, think it necessary to give him that instruction?

Casimiro Barcala, the most experienced of the house occupants, deciphered the enigma.

"Probably your father, on recommendation of Don Ventura, who is the prototype of order and economy, has cut down your allowance and he wishes to forestall your ill humor on hearing the news. . . . We all know you are the pattern of good manners, but, on hearing such a piece of news, would you be able to contain yourself without being forewarned?"

"Who is this Don Ventura?"

"Oh, a *type*! a loquacious old chap who will drive you wild with his discourses and his counsels, propounded with the greatest solemnity. He used to be judge of police court in Órdenes¹ and always gave sentences to the limit of the law. His *rectitude and justice* got him in bad with everyone in town, so he retired from the bench—he has a fortune and does not have to depend on his profession for a living—and came to live in Santiago. He knows law from the bottom up, Justinian, etc., etc., and novels and poetry besides, and, on top of all that, he, himself, is a great writer of prose and verse which he can spin right off the reel for you:

Behold! The last Roman
Waving his sheep-skin . . .
He brushes his hat

¹ Órdenes, a city about half way between Santiago de Compostela and La Coruña.

With solemnity,
And performs his tasks
To the stroke of a bell.

“When he bids anyone, he has just met for the first time, good bye, he salutes with the greatest ceremony [Casimiro arose to give an illustration] ‘I have great pleasure and still greater honor, my very dear sir; you already know who is your devoted servant, Ventura Lozano y Portilla, ex-judge of Órdenes, at your service.’ He certainly does like to hear himself talk; if you don’t look out, he will start in on you with a two hours discourse. . . . But, boy, he has two pretty daughters. . . . I have one of them for my girl, Ramona called Moncha for short, a divine creature. . . . If I don’t take care I’ll be roped in for good—but, I don’t know, we are always quarreling, because she is always contradicting me, which makes me furious.”

The next day, Gerardo got into his Prince Albert, topping himself off with his well brushed silk hat, and, at exactly half after twelve, the correct hour for formal calls in winter in Santiago de Compostela, presented himself with great dignity at Don Ventura’s door.

The worthy gentleman lived in *la calle del Franco* [Franco Street], occupying a three story house with balconies on the second story and a gallery running the length of the third; it had been whitewashed, but the whitewash was blackened and peeling from the smoke and humidity; the narrow portico had a rather imposing door with a shiny brass knocker which the Madrileño raised gently once without receiving any response and twice, more forcibly, before the door was opened, revealing a rather narrow stairway which went up directly from the front door. A coarse, female voice called from the top:

“What-che want?”

“Don Ventura Lozano y Portilla?”

“Who’re you?”

“Is the señor Don Ventura Lozano y Portilla at home?”

“Prob’ly. I’ll go see.”

In a minute or two the same voice called again:

“What-che want?”

“Will you please hand this card to Señor Lozano?”

“Well, what-che want uv him?”

“Will you be kind enough to take this card!”

“All right. I’ll come down.”

A barefooted servant girl descended the stairs, wiping her hands on a piece of gunny bagging hanging from her belt, and took the card handed to her by the young man, between her thumb and middle finger, touching it as little as possible.

“Don’t I hav’ tuh say anythin’ ōn’e jest giv’ ’im th’ card?”

“No, not anything.”

“Well, go ’long out then ’s long’s I know.”

“No; I shall wait, because you must bring me an answer.”

“Ay, very good, but step outside so’s I ken clos’ th’ door.”

At that moment, Don Ventura appeared in person to receive his guest.

“A thousand pardons, Señor Roquer! Please excuse this long wait and the stupidity of this female. She is a good creature, but as green as if she had just come from the country. Come in, come in! It gives me great pleasure that you should honor this humble dwelling which from today, I hope, you will consider your own.”

Don Ventura showed him into an obscure room on the second floor.

“Have the kindness to wait a minute, until I open the shutters.”—And for fear his visitor would not understand —“They are closed and so the room is dark.”

Then was heard the fall of some heavy piece of furniture, followed by one of those round oaths which are so comforting to apply to broken shins.

The light which partially penetrated some heavy curtains, showed to Gerardo a parlor furnished with pretentious severity, but without taste. There was a set of stuffed furniture upholstered in red; the wall was decorated with some very poor oil paintings of Don Ventura and his wife, a large chromo of the kind given away with Catholic periodicals, representing the Holy family, and three smaller ones also given with magazines, reproductions of “The Fall of Granada,” “The Conversion of the Duke of Granada”

and, the no less celebrated, "Lovers" by Muñoz Degraín. In the center of the room, in front of the regulation sofa and two chairs, was a small table covered with a silk scarf embroidered in many colors, on which stood a jar of artificial flowers with a thick photograph album beside it. In the space between the two balconies, was a long mirror in a gilt frame resting on a console on which was a kerosene lamp surrounded by a folding case filled with family photographs.

"Your visit which is for me an honor and motive for sincere gratitude, has already been announced," said pompously and solemnly, Don Ventura, as soon as they were seated; "your most respected father has written me concerning you. . . . Passions and wild oats for which he solicits my pardon and, at the same time, my severity to eradicate them root and branch. My respectable and respected friend, Don Juan Roquer, requested news of you from me and I have written him. If it be not all that his love and care as a tender parent could desire of his child, the report is good enough to tranquilize the explainable and well-founded fears aroused by your submersion in the slough of courtesan life. You neglect the halls of learning, which is censurable; but in the rest of your life, according to the dependable information which I have, your habits are irreproachable, and so I have informed your noble progenitor, to open his heart to the hope of a complete palingenesis."

From this point, Don Ventura started a sermon on the evils of life in large cities. If he were Minister of Education, he would establish Universities only in country towns where the amusements would consist of healthful, out-of-doors sports and moderate exercise in the gymnasium and contemplation of natural scenery, in the hours of recreation.

"More isolated than this?" ventured to inquire Gerardo with the boldness of insinuation.

"Yes, more, much more, my young friend. For its effects of perversion of youth, Compostela, without doubt, is becoming a second Madrid. I do not know the capital, but I have visited other cities of importance: La Coruña, Vigo, Lugo, Pontevedra, Orense, Ponferrada and León, and

from them, I can form some idea of what Madrid, in the delicate point of which we treat, must be."

The student listened to him with curiosity, costing him some pains to repress his laughter. While Don Ventura was talking, Gerardo was examining him from head to foot. The eloquent señor was small, bald, long-favored, adorning his face with a heavy white moustache trained in the military fashion of fifty years previous, supplemented by a goatee of the same style. He was dressed in severe black, even to his necktie.

When he had concluded his all but interminable sermon, the Ex-Judge of Órdenes asked Gerardo how his wound was healing.

"It came to my knowledge," he said; "no matter through what channels, that you very creditably comported yourself in the affair, although without sufficient details to warrant passing final judgment on the case; would you be kind enough to supply them? . . . But keeping strictly to the truth of both sides of the story."

The brave fellow related the incident, without giving any importance to his interference in defense of Carballo.

Don Ventura regarded Gerardo with the same penetrating look with which he examined criminals, when he was judge in the court at Órdenes, that, after a few minutes, became rather disconcerting.

When the lad had finished, the ex-judge said to him: "Look into this mirror," and repeated, shaking his bony index finger, to emphasize his solemn command: "Look into this mirror!"

Gerardo stood up, terrified by the prolonged, penetrating gaze of the ex-judge, prepared to swear that he had given a true report of the occurrence, and went toward the mirror between the windows of the balconies.

"Where are you going, my friend? The mirror which I wish to hold up to you, is the sad image of the ruined Lorenzo Carballo. Flee from a similar fate. Discipline your desires and commit yourself to the yoke of work which will be your salvation. For the rest, far from being censurable, I find your conduct in defending the man commendable and propose to so state in the succinct, truthful

and complete diary of your life in Santiago, which I shall remit to your respected and respectable, noble father."

"This will be a great deal of work for you," exclaimed Gerardo a little alarmed, but having an almost overpowering desire to laugh.

"Doing a favor to a friend is never a tiresome task."

"I would thank you not to mention this little matter to my father, but, if he should . . ."

"Inevitable."

"At least please do not say anything about the wound, so not to frighten him."

"I grant your request. I had already thought of that; but this forethought of a loving son does much honor to you whose words and actions are modifying the judgment which the first news I received concerning you led me to form. You are of those whom, in judicial parlance, we classify as 'occasional delinquents.' Your foundation is good and opens the doors of hope of a complete reform, which I take pleasure in believing is more than initiated."

And here, the indefatigable orator launched another discourse, at the end of which Gerardo hastened to take his leave.

"You have taken possession of this modest dwelling and gained a friend. When you have need of it or your humble servant they will be at your service. You must know that Ventura Lozano y Portilla, Ex-Judge of Órdenes, is always at your command."

"Thank you very much; I, also, am at yours. Do me the favor of presenting my respects to your esteemed wife."

"With pleasure. Wait! Since today begins our friendship, I wish to make it complete; as, in this noble and hospitable city, you have no family, my own ought to represent yours, even to fulfilling its duties in case of necessity from which I pray the Omnipotent to deliver you. I am going to present to you, with your permission, my wife."

He went out and returned immediately, accompanied by a tall, stout señora, with white hair, who still had rosy cheeks and must have been pretty once, and that not so very long ago. She came in excusing herself for being in her working dress, explaining that it was her daughter

Moncha's birthday, so she had invited two intimate girl friends to dine with them, and her husband had caught her in the kitchen making some little delicacies which she could not trust to the cook.

"I have told you before, my dear Segunda," interrupted her husband; "that the consideration of strangers obliges you to present yourself in the respectable clothes which are their due. Considering that the vestments of work are as respectable and honorable as the most brilliant toilet or the most formal uniform, and, as I also informed you, that the son of my renowned friend, the noble Don Juan Roquer, is a sensible man who knows how to take things, conceding to you the estimation he owes, you need make no excuses. I had already manifested to you that it was proper to appear in this guise."

Gerardo found the señora very agreeable; her simplicity and candor were a pleasing contrast to the arrogance and pretentiousness of her husband and after the superiority of her spouse's conversation, he listened with considerable interest to her small talk about Santiaguan life and maternal enthusiasm when referring to her daughters of whose beauty he confessed to have heard through public fame, which greatly pleased the good lady.

But the beauty of the girls, though not so great as Señor Roquer accredited them, was the least of their good qualities, she averred. The most important was the moral qualities with which the good Lord had endowed them. "So capable, so industrious, so kind and considerate, so well behaved! . . ." There was no end to Doña Segunda's tale of the merits of her daughters nor pause in it, which gave to the student the opportunity he was seeking for a second leave taking, till she was called to give attention to the custards and fritters and other dainties, she was preparing when interrupted by her husband.

Gerardo tried to improve the occasion to take his departure, particularly as he did not wish to be the cause of a batter or a cream passing the point of perfection, thus making an enemy of the señorita whose birthday dinner might be spoiled, and to whom he begged the señora to extend his felicitations.

“Wait a minute! I am going to introduce you to her,” proffered the proud mother.

Our friend looked towards the door hoping to escape, but he encountered the sharp eye of Don Ventura and desisted. Meanwhile Doña Segunda called to her daughters through the stairway window: “Filo! Moncha!” And presently two young girls appeared in the drawing room. The impressionable young man, although he had been annoyed at having to remain to meet them, found the señoritas very pretty and agreeable, notwithstanding, they had so little to say at first. Soon, they began to show that amiable and solicitous courtesy peculiar to Galicia, which makes the women of that blessed land where all beauty has its natural seat, so dangerous to the masculine heart.

There was promptly established between the girls and the Madrileño a certain intimacy and confidential familiarity. He was enchanted with their brightness and cordiality and was enjoying the sparring match of wits, finding it much more difficult to hold his own in this skirmish than in the struggle with the ruffians in the Hórreo.

Don Ventura and Doña Segunda, who were enjoying their observation of the combat, exchanged an expressive look in which, expert reader, you can readily detect the parental solicitude and foresight that are the same the world over, with which fathers and mothers—especially mothers—make haste to bait their hooks and cast their lines wherever they see promise of a good catch for their children.

Having received a message of approval from the Ex-Judge of Órdenes, by ocular telegraphy, Doña Segunda used as her bait the afore mentioned fritters and, naturally, urged Gerardo to remain to taste them; pressed by both parents and daughters, he could but accede to the invitation to take pot luck with them at their family dinner, promising himself a pleasant afternoon in contrast to those he had already spent in that dull town.

Doña Segunda excused herself and returned to her batters and doughs and creams; after a little, they all went

up to the dining room on the third floor, which was a simple apartment very plainly furnished, with two glass doors connecting it with one of those glazed galleries so common to the houses in Galicia, extending the length of the façade, that made the interior cheerful and afforded a good place of observation, by drawing the curtains which served the double purpose of excluding the sun—when there was any—and the curiosity of the neighbors opposite; here Moncha, Filo, Doña Segunda and Don Ventura, who took the keenest interest of any, kept informed of what went on in the street.

Looking out in this gallery and making fun of the medical students who were just leaving the Fonseca Building with great jubilation after the last class, were two señoritas to whom Don Ventura presented the young man with great ceremony.

“Children; I have the pleasure of presenting to you the señor Don Gerardo Roquer y Paz, son of my illustrious friend, the señor Don Juan Roquer who will, like yourselves honor our humble board. Señor Roquer, two intimate friends of my daughters; the señorita of Briay, Elvirita Briay, and our god-child, the señorita of Castro, Carmiña Castro Retén.”

V

It was late in the afternoon when Gerardo left Don Ventura's, happy and contented. The hours which he had just passed left a tender impression on his soul. He had never been in such good humor since his arrival in Santiago. When he stepped out into the *calle del Franco* it seemed more narrow and suffocating than it really was, and he longed for space to expand his spirit with his view and directed his steps towards the Herradura, walking slowly till he came to one of those seats from which there is such a glorious vista of the road to Pontevedra, the woods of Conjo and the softness of the fields of Vidán.

In that calm hour conducive to peaceful thoughts, a Galician twilight, this unparalleled promenade—oh the unjustness of it!—was deserted by the promenaders. Only a few canons and others of the clergy in still fewer numbers, walking slowly, were witnesses of the goodness of the place. Have you not noticed in other cities that the priests always choose the best walks?

To Gerardo, this solitude was grateful. He let his eyes wander abstractedly over the poetic landscape, while he thought over the hours he had just passed at Don Ventura Lozano's.

He smiled to himself as he remembered the erudite dissertations which Don Ventura imposed between each course and sometimes even during the courses and how opportunely one of his daughters would implacably cut them short; he recalled with pleasure the simple, abundant meal devoid of the ceremony which Madrid society exacts and with amusement the clownish serving woman responding to the poetic name of Amara, who left the serving dishes in front of Doña Segunda and went around with great embarrassment changing the plates as they were filled by the good lady, and not without her supervision; she thought it necessary to give the servant a thousand

directions which added to the poor creatures discomfort, now with her eyes, then in whispers and again out loud—when there was no other way—till the woman was so upset that she was more stupid than ever.

Doña Segunda, herself, from time to time, arose and fled to the kitchen—“... to see that the cook or the maid doesn't blunder,” she explained—from where occasionally came the sound of crashing china, which modified the cheerfulness of the “last Roman.”

The kind señora wished to stuff every one and, as she heaped up a plate, usually designated the person for whom it was destined.

“This is for you, Elvirita.”

“Oh! Doña Segundina, I can never eat all that!”

“We shall see . . . I know what you want.”

But what gave Gerardo the most satisfaction was the bold innocence, the ingenuous teasing of Señor Lozano's daughters who, as if they had been acquainted with him all their lives, began jollying him about his former escapades; they insisted upon his relating some of his pranks at the capital, in which relation, the student was somewhat modified by the timely intervention of parental authority, when it was verging on spiciness, and it was changed into a long narration of the charms of life in Madrid.

No knowing to what heights the fertile imagination of the Madrileño might have soared if Señorita Castro had not clipped its wings by making some pointed observation or other.

“Have you been in Madrid?” queried the boaster.

“Yes, Señor.”

“Many times?”

“Four or five.”

“For very long at a time?”

“From two weeks to a month; not very long.”

“Naturally, it seemed to you even less.”

“No, not really. As I did not have time to accustom myself to the life, Madrid did not particularly appeal to me; that is to say; I never felt that I should like to live there. You see, I am rather countrified; and—you will laugh at me—everywhere I went, I missed this beautiful

scenery and this tranquil life. Besides, Madrid like Paris, produced in me an impression of loneliness which grew to such proportions that it almost frightened me and made me wish to return to this peaceful place. There are many people; but among them all, one is always alone, while here, in these small towns and in the country—especially in the country—the least cry of pain always brings the aid and sympathy of a compassionate heart. Listen: I never had this impression so forcibly imprinted on my mind as one afternoon in Paris, years ago when I was but a child, on coming out of school. I saw a poor man sitting on the sidewalk—he looked as if he had fallen there from exhaustion—leaning against the wall. A policeman came and ordered him to move on; the man did not obey promptly and the officer took him by the shoulder and obliged him to walk along. A crowd collected and the poor unfortunate, with tears in his expressive eyes, looked at the people and spoke in some language which no one understood. By his gesture and the expression of his face, could be divined that he was relating some trouble, more than asking alms; but, nobody understood him and nobody cared; the people all went on their several ways with the greatest indifference. The only one who showed any sign of pity was the policeman. . . .

“I, then, like the little child that I was, went up to the poor man, took hold of his hand pressing it affectionately, and gave him all the money I had in my purse, which papa had sent me to buy little things. I am sure he thanked me more for my sympathy than for the money. . . . Being in a hotel always makes me want to cry. . . . I think this feeling of loneliness among so many souls is one of the most terrible sensations in the world. No, no!

‘In my little house
Will I live . . .’”

Gerardo, although impressed by the account, and still more by the simplicity and naturalness with which it was given in a sweet voice with pleasing accent, took it upon himself to defend life in large cities, free, as he claimed, from the pettinesses which poison it in small towns;

broad, more inspiring and above all—this was the strongest point—more diverting. As he expatiated on those promenades, those cafés, those bull fights, those theatres, etc., he turned and looked into the eyes of his listener and continued to search their depths as he descanted on the elegance of one set of pretty girls, the graciousness of another and then . . . “The public! Ah! The days of fashion displays! The gardens! The Concerts! . . .”

In contrast to the brilliant descriptions of the Madrileño, Señor Lozano's daughters painted the monotony of Santiaguan life; their only amusement was to walk in the Alameda Thursday and Sunday afternoons, when it was pleasant, in step to the music of the “brilliant municipal band” as the local papers described it, and, other days, to take a couple of turns through the Rúa and the Preguntoiro. No, not every day, because the fathers made a rule that girls should go out walking only every other day; a rule against which they, like all the rest of the young girls in Compostela, protested but to no avail. There were five balls during the year at the gentlemen's Casino: one on the Day of the Purification of the Virgin, two during the Carnival, or rather one and a half, for Tuesday night's dancing had to be stopped on the minute of twelve; the Ascension Ball and that of the Apostle. Some years there was one at Candlemas, but rarely.

“And, my goodness!” complained Moncha, “if they try to get up a little extra dance in the Casino, one of those terrible preachers who try to frighten the people on Sunday afternoons during Lent in San Augustin or San Francisco, gives a detailed account of all the torments of the inferno, in a voice that could be heard in the suburbs.”

“Daughter, moderation!” admonished Don Ventura, almost severely, without her taking much notice of the admonition.

“And the theatre? That opens about once a year, during the festival of the Apostle.” [Don Ventura always spoke of it as “The Coliseum of the Rúa Nueva,” to distinguish it from the others of the city, which did not exist.]

“Now, we learn through the Galician Gazette, that, this year, we are to have a ‘big company.’ It is going to give

fifteen or sixteen performances and if they have very good houses, *very good*, possibly five or six more. Even if we could all go every night . . . ! But papa subscribes for only two seats," pouted Filo; "so Moncha and I have to take turns."

"Yes," interrupted Moncha; "instead of taking a box, so we could go to the matinées. But father says he has to be saving so that we shall inherit more. . . . We don't care about being so rich! . . . As to reunions, we never have any. . . . Oh, Santiago de Compostela is diverting, indeed! I assure you."

"You forget your greatest diversion," slyly suggested Gerardo with a twinkle in his eye.

"What is that?"

"The students."

"Mercy!" burst out Doña Segunda, letting her fork fall, in her haste to cross herself; "The Lord preserve us! The word is enough, 'students!' birds of passage that pick a bit here and there, and when you are most sure of them, off they fly. When I hear that a young girl is taking up with a student, I am always sorry for her. . . . 'Another unfortunate!' I say to myself. What is her story? She falls in love, perhaps, despite the opposition of her family, suffering all the anguish of those days, giving up her *novenas*, sometimes even neglecting mass and other religious duties for which God favors us, all for his sake. . . . And then, as soon as he has a position: 'Adiós, here I must leave you, silly little one. You will be a pleasant memory of college days, but, now, I must have somebody else.' And he marries the señorita in his own town, with whom his family has made arrangements, or lets himself be taken in by some of those high fliers in Madrid, or Barcelona or Valladolid, while this unhappy child dies of grief. . . . [Doña Segunda's voice was trembling with emotion.] Every time I think that this might happen to one of my daughters, I feel like setting fire to the University. Blessed Mother of God! If I should see one of my girls taking up with a student! . . . Amara, remove the chicken and bring the other plates."

Elvirita Briay hardly had a place in Gerardo's thoughts. She was an angelic Pre-Raphaelite type, lamentably quiet

and unassuming. The college boys called her "The Wax Virgin"; Madeira used to refer to her as, "The Animated Statue," and Barcala, to plague Samoeiro, named her Señorita Simpleton.

She did not speak more than twice the whole afternoon, and then, it was because she could not refuse to answer a direct question.

As to Señorita Castro Retén. . . .

She, Carmiña, had made a deep impression on the youth, which was somewhat confused and difficult to define. He recalled with pleasure the jolly, agreeable daughters of Don Ventura, but the impression was *only* a pleasurable remembrance, while that made by Carmiña was deeper; it was her figure which stood out more vividly than any other in his mind—in his heart. She appeared to him a charming girl, not alone for her beauty, but, as being a person of discretion and common sense. What could he have been thinking of the first time he saw her? he questioned himself.

She had the same sincerity and simplicity and was just as bright as the others, but in a quieter way; therefore her sallies were more effective.

He remembered the thrust Carmiña had made with the utmost suavity, when Moncha was joking him about the sweetheart he would soon have in Santiago—for, as she said, what student was without one?—

"Ah, no, Monchiña! To Don Gerardo, accustomed to the beauty and elegance of the señoritas in Madrid, the poor girls of this small town will seem commonplace and unattractive."

Carmen talked less than the others, but what she said amounted to more. Her words denoted an intelligent woman of character; serious, at the same time full of fun. He noticed in her a certain pride, and, still, he felt sure that she had a heart.

That fascinating manner of speaking; that soft, melodious accent; that profound sincerity, so apparent, although accompanied by an enchanting simplicity, which the women of Galicia had—*that*, that must be the terrible weapon everybody meant, so dangerous to the masculine heart.

It was when singing that Carmiña had made the most

indelible impression on Gerardo. As they left the dinner table and went into a little adjoining sitting room, our gallant, to show off before these innocent provincial maidens, sat down to the piano and began to sing some of the latest popular songs, with that zest and ease of a Madrileño, imitating some of the comic opera singers most in vogue.

“Don’t you know any Galician songs?” asked Moncha.

Gerardo had heard them praised by the over fond Augusto, but he had considered the praise enthusiastic exaggeration.

“They are really very pretty,” asseverated Filo. “Come Carmiña, let Gerardo hear you sing one of them.”

“Why, the idea! He would laugh at me.”

“No, no! Please,” insisted Moncha; “sing ‘Thine Eyes.’”

“Or the ‘Adiós to Mariquiña.’”

It took no little urging to persuade Carmen to sing before this young man accustomed to hearing the great singers of Madrid. She felt that he would make fun of her provincial efforts, if not manifestatively (being a gentleman) inwardly; it was finally to obey the command of Doña Segunda that she sang a mountain ballad which so pleased her auditors, that they begged for others and she amiably continued singing in her clear, rich, mellow voice, the pastoral songs of her native land. Gerardo listened with growing delight to the tenderness and delicacy of that captivating music, a collection of touching melodies of which he could never tire.

“Adorable music!”

Gerardo was the most insistent of all for more of the divine music.

“You did not suspect that we had such musical treasures here; did you?” she said.

At last, because they thought, it would be an imposition to ask for more and that they ought to let her rest, Gerardo and the other girls went out into the gallery, praising warmly the art and the sentiment of the singer. Señorita Castro Retén remained at the piano fanning herself; the breeze slightly lifted the coquettish curls from her forehead; her face was animated and her cheeks flushed, mak-

ing her appear more beautiful than ever. Soon her agile fingers began to wander over the key board, preluding another suave melody; her head was raised and her wistful eyes seemed lost in a vision of love, as she broke into this plaintive canzonet:

Sitting one night in a garden,
By the light of a brilliant moon,
A maiden forlorn was weeping
The disdain of a lover untrue.

Gerardo was attracted by the song and quietly, very quietly approached the piano and stood leaning against it, deeply touched by the pathetic ballad which Carmiña sang rather from the heart than the lips:

The echoes repeated the strain,
As it flew on the wings of the wind;
Melancholy lament repeated:
“I die and none cares for my pain!”

The singer's eyes remained fixed; who could read their vision? Her firm chest rose and fell and one could almost detect a sigh as she sang. She gently swayed her head as if to give still more expression to the music and in a voice tremulous with emotion, began the last two stanzas:

And the looks of the people who passed,
Were a cross which she could not bear.
“On the wind with the birds I would fly!
Oh, could I but fly with ye!”

But the birds flew away to the thickets,
Without heeding her bitter lament;
And only the wind repeated:
“Oh, could I but fly with ye!”

The voice, that divine voice which penetrated to the very soul of the listener, ceased; ceased in a supplicating decadence and, as the last note died away, tears which she hastened to brush aside, sprang to her lustrous eyes and

smiling Carmiña turned to the Madrileño evincing as much emotion as she, and said:

“It is very pretty; is it not?”

“Yes, very beautiful; but, much more beautiful because sung by you. I assure you, I have never heard such music nor such a singer.”

Later, when they happened to find themselves alone in the gallery, he reiterated the thanks which he had already written to her father, for the aid they had rendered him on the day he was hurt and added:

“I have a favor to ask of my amiable nurse; that I may keep the handkerchief which she left on my cut as a memento.”

“My handkerchief? Why? It is a poor memory which needs some material object to keep it alive.”

In saying this, she looked into his eyes with such a sweet, tender expression, that even the recollection of it thrilled the gallant from the capital.

Oh, the songs, the eyes and the voice! Why was he so stirred even at the remembrance of them? What was this new sensation? Gerardo did not care to trouble himself to analyze it, but he was conscious of a new and agreeable sentiment at the bottom of his heart. . . . In love? He, the avowed skeptic? No, goodness gracious, no! What foolishness! Perhaps she would prove an agreeable distraction to help pass away the time of the tedious months ahead of him—nothing more. Hadn’t Augusto told him, that what he needed was a girl to cure him of the blues?

The vanity of the youth did not for a minute doubt the easy surrender of the castle when once he should lay siege to it. It would be a glorious conquest. “No one has ever received any favors from Señorita Castro Retén,” he remembered hearing Augusto say.

Besides, Carmiña was beautiful, elegant, intelligent, sensible and, with all, had such a sweet manner. . . .

And that expression in her eyes! That wonderful voice!

* * * * *

When the lights were lighted, the señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, left the promenade and started for the house through the Rúa del Villar very much frequented at this

hour, particularly by students talking and laughing as they walked along in groups or stood near the shop windows singing in chorus.

When he had almost reached the end of the street, Roquer met Señora Lozano and her daughters with their two friends, out taking the air.

Filo and Moncha bowed very pleasantly when Gerardo tipped his hat and Carmiña's smile seemed to light up the whole street; it was like the sun on a Galician landscape. He was in doubt whether to wait a few minutes and then retrace his steps, so to meet them again when they came back, or to go home. He finally decided on the latter, thinking that he ought not to be too prodigal with his presence.

Going up the steps, his ear caught confused snatches of a song which became much clearer on opening the door. He did not go to his room, but directly to the dining room from which the music emanated.

There, he found a little orchestra made up from the inmates of the house and a few college boys from outside. When they saw our friend appear in the doorway, they struck up the royal march accompanied by the drumming on glasses and plates of those not furnished with other instruments.

The diminutive Nietiño was the leader of the orchestra, using a flute for his baton which from time to time he played, when it did not seem necessary to beat the time. Manolito Gómez, Julio Quiroga, Javier Flama and another boy from outside were the violinists; Boullosa and Paulino Lago strummed *bandores*; Barcala, Augusto, Casás and half a dozen others filled in the bass with their guitars, most of them seated on the long table which they had pushed up against the wall to give more space in the room. Pepe Nieto and Samoeiro were the flute players. Samoeiro had left distance enough between himself and Nieto, so that he would be out of reach of the spray from that forceful player's instrument. Other fellows made up the chorus to which many of the stringed instrument players added their voices.

In the center of the chorus, Madeira was accompanying with a tambourine which he was pounding very seriously

with his hands, elbows, knees, feet and head; in fact, with every projecting point on his body, making grotesque leaps and contortions that almost caused the onlookers to burst their buttons laughing. Madeira pretended to be vexed that they should treat his art with so little respect.

"What are you up to?" inquired Gerardo, as soon as the noise of his welcome subsided somewhat.

"We are practicing to go out serenading tonight. Samoeiro hasn't forgiven us yet and so we are trying to get into his good graces again by serenading his girl."

"Huh! and yours too. It isn't all for my sake."

"Whether you believe it or not, we are certainly making ourselves all this trouble to get back into your good graces by tendering our respects to Señorita Simpleton," retorted Barcala.

"Come on! Let's play 'Don Pepito,' so Roquer can hear it," proposed Nietiño. It's a mighty pretty mazurka that Maximino Regalado has composed for us."

After the Mazurka, they played a waltz and several other little dances and finally a potpourri of Galician airs, arranged by Nietiño, which ended by one Gerardo had just heard Carmiña sing.

"Sing little brook, sing little brook!"

Then he mentioned a number of others he had heard at Don Ventura's which most of them, having the happy Galician gift of music, recalled immediately.

"Here's to this beautiful land!" cried Paulino Lago when they had finished, and Gerardo shouted louder than anyone.

"That was a good idea of Roquer's to remind us of these songs. They will be a great addition to our repertoire."

"I tell you what! We shall make a great hit."

"It is many a year since they have heard such a serenade in Santiago as we shall give them tonight. This Nietiño is a corker for arranging music."

The musicians from outside went away after agreeing on the rendezvous for ten o'clock.

"If I asked you, would you be willing to go to a certain place and sing some Galician songs?" Gerardo rather timidly broached the subject to his companions after they were seated at the table.

"Holy Virgin! What's this? You got a girl? Aren't you the sly one to keep it so quiet!"

"Oh, no! I just wish to pay a debt of gratitude and, hearing you sing, it occurred to me, that this would be a delicate way to do it. Nothing more. If you will do this, I will invite you all to supper, wherever you may suggest."

"Why, yes, man! We will gladly go to sing anywhere you like, even without an invitation to supper."

"Good!" asserted Barcala; "we will go where you like and sing what you like and take supper afterward at the Masón or at the Crechas. Madeira and Casás who are eagles at that business, will take charge and make all preparations, selecting the menu included, and you make out the program for us."

"Only Galician songs," answered the Madrileño; "that one beginning: 'Sitting one night in a garden . . .' and that other: 'Far from my native land'"

"I shouldn't have believed it, but you are a man of good taste," affirmed Casimiro Barcala losing himself in a passionate dissertation on the music and poetry of Galicia.

It seemed to Gerardo, that shortly after they had begun to sing, he saw the curtains of the gallery stir a trifle and Augusto noticed it too. At the end of their first piece, he called in a loud voice: "Gerardo! Roquer!"

"What is the matter with you yelling at me like that when I am right here?" asked Gerardo in surprise.

"So that she will know that it is you who are giving the serenade, stupid!"

After paying their respects to a number of other girls in three hours of serenading, most of the fellows went with the liberal Gerardo to the famous tavern of the Crechas. The bill of fare was not very choice nor of great variety; some large slices of hake with green peas, those large, juicy cutlets for which the house was famous, native cheese and apples, and "wine of heaven"; but each student seasoned it with the sauce of appetite and merriment, so

that "Her Imperial and Celestial Majesty, the Empress of China," never tasted greater delicacies.

To aid digestion, the boys drank freely and talked with their elbows, which was very natural, having their mouths occupied in other duties, celebrating the success of their night's work and puffing themselves up with pride. These self-declared geniuses felt that they were equal to going on the stage.

"I tell you," Augusto was assuring them, with his mouth full; "Santiago never heard a serenade like this. When we were finishing at Josefina Rubianes', Bartolomé Reboredo said to me, that, even in Madrid where he went last month with the City Commission to visit Don Eugenio, he didn't hear anything equal to this."

"And do you know why we made such a great success?" asked Barcala even more enthusiastically: "It was because we threw over this common, popular stuff and sang only our own music which we have at heart and, because we have it in our hearts, we feel it; the music of Galicia! Our music!"

His fervent zeal led him into a regular eulogy of the local music and poetry. "Adalid, Montes, Chané—Rosalía, the divine Rosalía, 'the tenth muse,' as she has been called by no less a personage than Castelar; the sublime Curros, in whose verses palpitate the vigor and tenderness of the race; the virile Pondal, the thoroughly Galician Añón, Aureliano Pereira, Lamas Carvajal, Alberto Ferreira, the picturesque Don Benitino Losada, that poor little paralytic who used to go to the Casino every day in his wheel chair. . . . And, in another phase of literature, the grandeur of the gigantesque novelist of the century, the sublime Eça de Queiroz. I certainly take off my hat to him," and he made a reverential salaam.

"Oh, here, you! What you talking about?" interrupted Madeira, who had visited Braga, Segadaes and Valença d'o Minho the year before at carnival time and would not permit the slightest mistake about the neighboring kingdom: "Eça de Queiroz is Portuguese."

"What do you know about it? He is Galician, purely Galician! Galician through his virility, Galician by his tenderness, Galician by his irony; his characters are

Galician; his love of the land makes him a Galician. Here's to Rosalía, Curros, Eça de Queiroz! To your glory which is ours. Drink with me, Galicians!"

Excited by wine and the convincing words of Barcala the convivium broke into applause; but Madeira in his rôle of honorary Portuguese and well informed personage, having spent five days in the sister country playing the tambourine, I would have you know, gentlemen, arose to oppose Casimiro in another patriotic speech which was very confusing to the brains already befogged with good spirits.

"We don't need the foreigner! We have enough of our very own without trying to claim any outside. Down with the foreigner! Thrust forth the vile invader!"

They were put out of the tavern—very diplomatically, to be sure—about four o'clock in the morning on account of their lamentable condition.

Once out in the street, they separated; some staggering home, others mysteriously disappearing. Alvaro Soto, Alejandro Barreiro and Augusto leaned up against a wall and began pouring forth their most sentimental repertoire, till a night watchman shut them up and made them go home. Barcala, his guitar under one arm, his cape dragging after his uncertain steps, attached himself to Gerardo and confided to him in a tearful voice that those barbarians didn't know anything about literature. "Not one of um's read a sing'l Eça de Queiroz. D'you t'ink 'at any one can live wi'out re'din' 'normously? I don' bos' 'bout it, but's my passhun. *Viva la literatura! Viva Galicia! Down wi' th' French Rev'lution!*"

"What do you think of Carmen Castro Retén?" inquired Gerardo, also in a confidential mood.

Barcala stopped short and leaned against the wall, so to be sure not to fall, and took off his hat with the greatest obeisance.

"Carmen! Carmen!! . . . Carmen, the pink, the poem! . . . *Viva th' beauty!*" and he sank slowly to the sidewalk where he remained. Gerardo almost had to carry him home.

The rest of the "Troyans" amused themselves by changing the signs over the stores. On the Mayor's balcony they

put one from a pastry shop, which read in big letters: "Pasteleria"; over a drug store door they hung "El Buen Gusto" (Good Taste). They stuck up a tobacco store sign over an under-wear shop and over the Dean's front door was found one which read: "Specialist in Caprices for Ladies."

VI

Secretly, but not without the 22,223 vigilant eyes—the odd number is for a one-eyed man—with which Compostela watches with curiosity every movement of each neighbor's son, daughter, father or mother, of each stranger and all his relatives, taking note, Gerardo began to give attention to those trifles which have been considered worthy of attention by amorous young men ever since a house was erected to shelter a pretty girl.

Briefly; our friend, Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, “went a-courting” Señorita Castro Retén with all the procedures, formulas and fashions which youths, in all parts of the world where there are inflammable masculine hearts and feminine beauty to set fire to these dangerously combustible substances, employ.

Carmiña lived near the Alameda, in the “calle de la Senra,” which is, without doubt, the pleasantest part of Santiago de Compostela, and Gerardo walked by there every day about noon—as if that were the way to his business—every afternoon when he went out and returned from his promenade, and as many other times as possible.

The balconies of the second story, as was the Santiaguan custom, were always hermetically sealed—windows and shutters closed—to show due respect to the reception room by keeping it as nearly in total darkness as might be. The rest of the house is for the family. The white curtains in the gallery of the third story were always hanging straight down and, apparently, never moved.

Yet, sometimes, Gerardo imagined that they were raised just the least bit, when he passed by; but he might well be mistaken; it was probably the imaginary movement of his fancy. If they were moved, for whom were they moved; for Gerardo or for one of the other gallants who was sauntering through the wide, cheerful avenue, with his gaze glued to the Gallery?

Because, you must know, there were three others, besides

our hero, who were paying court to Señorita Castro Retén.

First on the list, or in the lists, was an elegant, feather-brained bantum always dressed in the latest, most exaggerated and absurd fashion which had arrived in Santiago by way of La Coruña and the stop-over station, Cornes—becoming somewhat corrupted before it reached Compostela—and who changed his necktie two or three times a day, convinced that the surest road to a woman's heart was a shiny shirt-front and a coquettish tie.

Then there was a churlish, ridiculous, overgrown countryman, one of those whom college boys make the butt of their jokes. His house companions told him that Señorita Castro was crazy about his fine figure. He spent all his spare time—with his tanned, calloused hands rammed into a pair of bright yellow leather gloves which pinched to the point of agony; his gawky torso encased in a jacket of indescribable color, making a funny contrast with the wide brimmed hat, awkwardly pulled down over the back of his neck, and his clumsy shoes—shuffling up and down before that young lady's abode. He was prepared at any moment—as soon as his companions should say the word—to pounce upon the bantum, whom he believed to be the cause of Señorita Castro's failure to show herself on the balcony, and compel him to confine his struttings and Don Juanesque postures which he practiced so carefully before the mirror, to other quarters.

Number three was a plantigrade—certainly, not because his feet lacked width; he seemed to have great difficulty—if one could judge by the effort he made—in managing them; they pointed in different directions, which gave their owner a duck-like waddle. Except for his bulging eyes, the plantigrade did not have a bad looking face which was favored, besides,—as the precious gift of heaven—with a thick bristly moustache in a variety of shades, and eyebrows to match—both kept carefully brushed. However, it was not his physical attractions nor yet his elegant manner of dress, that made this gallant a dangerous rival; it was his superior mental qualities recognized by all his fellow townsmen, his talent for spinning rhymes on all occasions, about everything and everybody worthy of his lyrical ability, and his “eloquent oratory,” [Quoted from

The Liberty] the copious and indefatigable current of which used to astonish his audience, as it flowed from the beginning of his discourse, in a mellifluent stream of brilliant ideas couched in clever metaphors and apostrophes, for an hour, two hours or more if necessary, and the reputation for exemplary comportment enjoyed by the boy—did I say boy?—MAN in the city. Yes, indeed, a formal and judicious man was he—having finished his law course the year before—and his opinion and judgment were highly considered in the *Senate* of the rusty areopagus of wise old men who assembled in the anteroom of the Casino every afternoon. Fathers, when they wished to stimulate their sons by a good example, always pointed to this studious, talented and serious young man, vice president of all the societies—secular and religious. Don Ventura felt a great admiration for him, almost as great as that inspired by the constitutionalists of Cádiz, Castelar, the famous portico of the Gloria, the dramas of Echegaray and the “Fall of Granada” by Pradilla, which was familiar to him through the chromos that popularized the famous painting.

Number three, the plantigrade, was called Octavio Fernández Valiño, although he was better known by his nickname, *Maragota*, one he inherited from his mother, Jacinta Valiño, a widow who married for her second husband, about two years before Gerardo came to Santiago, Angelito Retén, brother of Carmiña Castro’s mother.

Jacinta Valiño, alias *Maragota*, had Octavio by her first marriage, or rather during the time of her first marriage. Her husband was a coal miner in Faramello, not far from the country seat of the Reténs—and what were a few miles more or less on the wonderful highway from Pontevedra to Santiago?

Jacinta was a little woman with a trim figure, strong, astute, possessing great determination and energy disguised under the appearance of meekness and insignificance. When her first husband died, she went into service at the Retén estate. Señorita Castro Retén’s grandparents who took her in out of compassion, lost no time in discharging her, however, when they discovered her relations with Don Angelito, which it was rumored by the country people

dated back to long before the death of her first husband, and they used to point out the traces of resemblance between Don Angelito and Octavio Fernández Valiño.

As soon as his parents passed away, *Maragota* began to lay her plans to marry her lover; but then she ran up against the only obstacle in her life, which she was unable to surmount, in the person of Doña Ramona, Carmen's mother, who was now the head of the Retén family. She was a person of good sense and inflexible will and opposed it to the marriage of her brother with this woman of inferior social position; but two years previous, six months after the death of his sister, the wedding took place, which caused a temporary rupture between Don Angelo and the Castro family. But for a year, now, Octavio had been paying court to Carmiña Castro Retén and might be seen at all hours strolling through "la calle de la Senra," frequently accompanied by his friend and admirer, the humpbacked and vindictive Jesusito Mollido, editor of *The Liberty*.

Our friend, Gerardo, did not concede any importance to these rivals, least of all to the formidable *Maragota* who, with all the weight of his hendecasyllables and fluent discourses with which he used to dazzle the feminine youth at the solemn musical-lyrical-oratorical sessions of the Atheneum—of which he dignified the vice presidency—added to his year and a half of promenading before her residence, following her everywhere possible and casting languid looks in her direction, was never rewarded by a single glance, to say nothing of a smile, from the young lady. Decidedly, Carmiña was a person of good taste.

It is true that neither had Gerardo anything on which to build his conceited hope; but our gallant, at that time, was in a state of optimism and saw everything through the rose-colored glass of his desires.

Very soon, although he tried to hide it, it was well known that the Madrileño was in love with the señorita Castro.

The first to discover it—could there have been any doubt about it?—was Augusto Armero.

"I see you have fallen a victim," he said one afternoon when he met Gerardo walking in the Senra.

Roquer protested against the supposition.

"No, I haven't fallen; but as I have to have some distraction in this God-forsaken place and the distraction is of the first order—well, we will see what fortune."

With similar answers, he kept pacifying his friends and deceiving himself, because, in reality, he was not sure of the nature of his sentiments towards Señorita Castro Retén nor how deeply they were rooted.

"The chief thing is," he used to say, "to have a pastime."

"Ah! have a care with those pastimes," warned Barcala; "these pretty Galicians so simple, so sweet, are very dangerous. Better look out, Gerardo!"

But Roquer, sure of himself, made a disdainful gesture of superior man, and continued on his way.

As if he would ever really fall in love with a provincial, however pretty, sweet, agreeable and well educated she might be. "The idea!"

The smile with which the gentle young lady returned his bow, whenever he met her on the street in the Alameda and her amiability when, a few days after the dinner at Don Ventura's he made the call which he owed at the Castro residence, to thank the señorita and her father for the services rendered, were unmistakable signs that his attentions were acceptable and presaged an easy conquest.

In those days, arrived in Compostela Villapando's much advertised comic-lyric-mimic-dramatic-*terpsichoric* company.

Federico Villapando, alias *Repolo*, was the manager, director, leading man, etc., of this company which took possession of the principal, and *only*, theatre of Santiago de Compostela. Notwithstanding the many years he had been making the rounds of the principal theatres of Galicia and León, he played to packed houses at each performance. His versatility was unlimited; he was as well qualified to present tragedy as comedy; could easily turn to burlesque or farce; his vaudeville acts or legerdemain performances were wonderful to behold and his support of chorus girls—who were also dancers, in fact, lacked little of the aptitude of their manager—made a great hit with the student body. By way of novelty, this season, he was substituting,

for the one-act play with which it had hitherto been customary to close the performance, a vaudeville act of singing and dancing. The crowded theatre bore witness to his good judgment.

What a pleasant auditorium! It was identical with almost all the provincial theatres; the decorations the same, the dimensions small; maroon paper on the walls; the bulging fronts of the boxes painted in white and gold; the chairs done in velvet to match the walls—both somewhat faded; but the whole made a rather pleasing atmosphere of intimacy, which between its severity and cheerfulness was attractive. For, who noticed such trifles as wall paper and paint, upholstery and hangings, when there were so many pretty girls to embellish the boxes and seats?

Up in the hot and uncomfortable second balcony or in the more pretentious, although not less uncomfortable first, sat the students talking and laughing between the acts and shouting to their comrades in distant parts of the house, cracking sharp jokes enjoyed by the jesters and listeners, but stinging as whip lashes to those who were the butts of them; some of the banter was funnier than the pleasantry of the comedians; at least, the audience laughed more.

The spectators assembled with the punctuality of those who have but little to do. First, arrived the gallery gods who all tried to rush up the narrow stairway at the same time, noisily pushing and jamming one another, to get the best seats, not only to see the performance, but to carry on a series of communication with their friends by wireless telephony. As the other parts of the house were being gradually filled, those from above often shouted to different ones as they entered:

“Hello *Whiskers!* Does your mother know you’re out? Run home, run home to your own fireside!”

“Ah there! Señor Flapdoodle; how many chestnuts have you sprung today?”

A dozen shrill voices ceremoniously saluted Don Ventura: “It gives me the greatest pleasure and the highest honor to salute you, Señor *Gasbag.*”

But our self-centered friend Olympically despised such tomfoolery and as soon as Doña Segunda and her daughters who had finally overcome the economical resistance of

the ex-judge, were settled, he began to overwhelm them with his surpassing erudition.

"How pretty the theatre looks tonight!" proffered the good señora.

"It is certainly gratifying, the spectacle of such a select audience as fills tonight this magnificent coliseum," hastened to expatiate the above-mentioned *Señor Gasbag*. "Coliseum, from Colosseum: colossal. Thus rendering homage to a people and customs, that were a beacon to the world, designating these auditoria of spectacles by a name taken from the first colossal amphitheatre of Flavius. . . ."

Nobody was listening. Doña Segunda's attention was taken with examining costumes and coiffures, which would give her a topic of conversation for days to come. Moncha had her opera glasses fixed on the waxed, turned-up ends of Barcala's moustache, which antedated by some time the style set by the Kaiser. [William probably copied it from him.] And Casimiro, from his seat in the gallery, was smiling and smirking at the pretty girl who did not know whether to laugh or be angry.

For her part, Filo was coquetting with three or four young men, who were looking daggers at one another, greatly to the satisfaction of the little flirt, who hoped through them to make Augusto Armero jealous; to her vexation, he was too busy to notice unimportant things like that, running from one place to another, from boxes and orchestra stalls to *nigger heaven* picking up a bit of news here and carrying it there, happy in this useless activity which gave him a chance to make a show of his intimacy with everybody.

"Did you know that that lady married a man from Valencia when the company was at Albacete, and separated from him in three days? . . . Did you know that the manager had had a row with the head dancer? But she doesn't care. They say there is an officer on the Ferrol, who is in love with her. . . ." And at the next intermission he amplified the details: "Oh, it wasn't an officer of the Ferrol who is in love with her; he isn't in the navy at all; he is in business in Rivadavia. She isn't the first dancer. . . . And that I told you about the manager isn't for sure. . . ." etc.

Every once in a while the heavy voice of Madeira would make the arduous busy-body furious, calling down to him: "Augustiño! Can't you be quiet and stay in one place a minute?"

Madeira, Barcala, Manolito! . . . Whoever would know to see them sitting there so happy and unconcerned, that they had had such a struggle to scrape up the price of tickets?

Precisely on this occasion, the maneuvers to which they had had to resort to get together enough money to buy tickets, exhausted all the resources of their fertile ingenuity, and would have been a worthy subject for a Homeric canto. Only on account of the disdain with which the municipality of Santiago treats heroic deeds which add to her glory, did it fail to erect a monument in bronze and marble, in commemoration of this battle won by three brave citizens, in one of the principal squares; for example, similar to the magnificent one to Rosalía de Castro in the plaza bearing her name.

"See here, Madeira, have you got any money?" asked Manolito that afternoon, as they and Barcala were going to the café.

"Money? What'cha mean, money, the fourteenth of the month?"

"Nor you, Casimiro?"

Barcala did not even deign to answer.

"Well, how are we going to go to the theatre?"

"Let's go to the Circo de Artesanos¹ and see if we can't resuscitate a couple of *deaders*."

"Didn't they tell you the other night that the first dead one you resuscitated would bury you alive?"

"I think the best thing to do," fiercely proposed Madeira, "is to stand in some dark corner and knock the block off the first bloke that comes along who looks as though he had anything."

"Very well, but we haven't any blackjacks."

"I can't think of anything else."

"Nor I; cuss the luck!"

"Neither can I; confound it!"

All of a sudden, as they were opposite the Casino, Bar-

¹ Circo de Artesanos, a cheap gambling house.

cala clapped the palm of his hand to his forehead and exclaimed:

“I have it!”

“What?”

“How to get the price.”

“Where?”

“There,” pointing out a group of men in the vestibule.

“There, in the right-hand pocket of Don Bartolomé Reboredo’s jacket; it is as good as ours right now.”

“What do you mean?”

“What day is this?”

“Thursday.”

“And doesn’t Don Bartolomé go every Thursday night, all muffled up in his cape, flattering himself that no one will recognize him, to the Cascarilla to see Michiña?”

“Supposing he does?”

“We have only to stand in the dark alley-way and when he comes along. . . .”

“Pounce on him and snatch a dollar out of his pocket—or two, so to have enough for two days. . . .”

“Don’t be a barbarian, Madeira. We shan’t have to resort to any such means; Don Bartolomé will be glad enough to give it to us, to get us out of there. Don’t you understand?”

“Very well.”

“Leave it to me.”

It happened as Barcala had foreseen. About half after seven, Señor Reboredo, his cape up to his eyes, started out, walking very fast and keeping close to the wall; frequently, he would turn his head to see if anyone were following him. He was just going to knock at the gate, when two figures stepped out of the alley and placed themselves between him and the entrance.

“Good evening, Don Bartolomé,” said one of them. “Come this way; it’s too muddy there.”

“Eh?” blurted out Don Bartolomé in surprise. “Oh! Is it you, Barcala? Good evening. What are you doing out here? I have just come from the City Hall and am going to the Casino.”

“Caramba! It seems to me, that you go considerably out of your way.”

"Yes, just for the exercise."

"We are just waiting here till a man who owes me two dollars, comes out. He went into this other house before we could catch him, but we shall stay here till he comes out again if it is all night, because there is a mighty good thing at the theatre. . . ."

"And the Spanish dance, *La tertulia* . . ." added Manolito, to whom the dancing and the dancers appealed more than anything else.

"And we've got to get this money to buy the tickets. . . ."

"Yes, and we are going to stay right here till we do get it, no matter what happens. . . . I bet you don't know who went into that house a few minutes ago! . . . Michiña. My, but she did look pretty! She's a peach!"

"What's that?"

"She was awfully pretty. She had a wicked little look in her eyes and her mouth was as fresh as . . ."

"And don't forget her fine figure!" broke in Manolito.

"Yes. . . . So, two dollars. . . . I say, Michiña. . . ."

"She's a darling! If she comes out before the man who owes me two dollars, I shall have to go with her. . . . Do you know who came along right after her? Señor Rebulleiro. I don't know, but I think he was following her."

"Ah! Yes? The old green eyes! And what?" queried Don Bartolomé.

"As soon as he saw us he went on, up the street. He, also, said he was going to the Casino. Everybody takes this roundabout way to go to the Casino tonight."

"Just for a walk. Good night and good luck." Don Bartolomé started up the street.

"The darned old fool!"

But he turned round again.

"I believe you've caught your fish, after all. Oh, Boy!"

"See here, boys! I am sorry to have you stand around here all the evening and lose the best part of the show. I am going to give you the price of entrance tickets; here's two pesetas," offering the money to Barcala.

"You've made a mistake, Don Bartolomé."

"Ah! No? Pardon me. I didn't mean to offend you." And put the money back into his pocket.

"Oh, no, Don Bartolomé; I meant that you had made a mistake in the amount. You gave us two pesetas and we have to have two dollars."

"All right. Here is your sum. Go and have a good time."

"A million thanks! We'll go *a-flying* and without turning to look behind us. Good night, Don Bartolomé. Hope you'll have a good time too."

It did not take them many minutes to get to the theatre with Maderia who was waiting for them on the corner.

"Three entrances!" demanded Barcala, throwing down a dollar, which the ticket seller examined and returned to him, saying: "Probably you have other money?"

"What's the matter with that?"

"This is counterfeit."

"Counterfeit?"

"Yes."

The reader may here use his full vocabulary of maledictions and he will still be lacking in the curses which rained on the head of Don Bartolomé.

"Let's go give him a good beating!"

"How are you going to find him now?"

"The best thing is to try to pass the dollar."

But they kept stopping to heap more curses on the head of their false friend and his false money.

"The robber! I'll get even with him yet. The devil take him!"

"Let's go hunt for him. As long as his dollar won't pass, we'll pass him one that he won't forget in a hurry."

"No, let him wait! Come with me," suggested the fertile-brained Barcala.

The three went to the *plaza del Pan* [Bread Square], where Casimiro Barcala left his companions on the sidewalk and went into a bakeshop which had been kept by the same family for several generations and was famous for its pastry, exquisite boxes of jelly and other confections made by the habile hands of the nuns of Belvís and San Payo.

It was a dirty little shop, kept in the front part of their dwelling house, like so many in Santiago, divided from it by the counter which extended from the street door to that

of the stairs. The scanty furnishings consisted of a water-color painted on white, now profusely covered with black specks which a hundred generations of flies had been depositing as souvenirs of their passage over the sweets; a woman of certain age, with a sullen face; a little fat man with a small, red velvet cap bordered with crude colors, stuck on the back of his head; an oil lamp hung from the ceiling, encased in pink gauze which tinted the dim light it gave, leaving the shop in semi-obscurity; and a couple of chairs.

On the other side, as a kind of accessory ornament, was a dirty, drunken fellow sprawling on the counter, sipping a cup of rum—the third or fourth—and talking to himself, without anyone taking any notice of him.

The owner of the bakeshop, or pastry shop, went by the name of *Don Hilarión*—I do not know for what reason—and his wife, by *La Leona*, on account of her bad temper. It made them both furious to be so called, and more than once, a weight or a stick or a box—even a box of jelly—had gone flying out of the shop at the head of some saucy rascal who dared to poke it in at the door and call out their nicknames.

You can imagine the effect on the inmates of the shop when Barcala with the most innocent air, after having said: “Good evening,” very politely, put the question:

“Will you please tell me if this is Don Hilarión’s pastry shop?”

“Who are you and what do you want?” stormed *La Leona*, turned rabid immediately.

“Señora. . . ! I beg of you! I hope I haven’t offended you by inquiring if this is Don Hilarión’s pastry shop.”

“Well, I tell you that we don’t answer such impudence here. Get out or I’ll throw a weight at your head.”

“Ay, señora!” pleaded Casimiro, pretending to be afraid. “You have a nice way of treating your customers. I’m going, I’m going! But won’t you tell me what I have done or said amiss? I have just come in from Padrón; my wife told me to be sure to bring her a couple of boxes of jelly from Don Hilarión’s, because, they say, that is the best. It is a *longing* she has; you know. Don’t lose your temper; let me finish. I inquired for this famous pastry

shop and was directed here, but as soon as I open my mouth, you fly into a passion and insult me."

"It is because they call my husband *Don Hilarión* to make fun of him."

"But, the gen'lmun didn'd mean nuthin'." The drunkard was offering his conciliatory services. "B'sides, you know ev'rybody calls *Don José* like 'at, an't don't hurt 'im none. Zay calls me *Flatnose*, 'cause my nose . . ." laying a dirty finger onto his nose; "but, I don' care. If zay jes' ask me to hav' a cup o' rum . . . or two . . . or more . . . 'm I right or no? 'Course I am. Please," offering the cup. "T'anks." He emptied the cup at one gulp, pounded the cup down onto the counter and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "'Nother cup, *Don José*. See, I don' call 'im 'at. Gimme it filled up to the top, li'l saint."

"I thought you were making fun of my husband," said *La Leona* to the student, without taking any notice of the drunken man.

"God forbid! Señora. Why should I make fun of him? I am a storekeeper, too, and I demand respect from everyone. But, caramba! you almost frightened me. You were as ferocious as a lioness."

"I want you to know that I won't stand for that, either. Throw a weight at him, *José*."

"Caramba! señora; you have a very irascible temper. What is the matter now?"

"You're right," chimed in *Flatnose*. "You're right, señor, 'at's jes' w'at she is, a lioness; 'pon my word. Gi' me 'nother cup. Here's to my health!" and he swallowed another cup of the dynamite.

"Very well, señora," Barcala excused himself humbly; "I did not know. . . . The old proverb says well: 'Never speak till you know to whom you are speaking.' Good evening." He started towards the door.

"What is it you want?" at last spoke up the baker.

"I have already told you, but, as every time I speak, I seem to say something to displease . . ."

"Aw, don' mind her, señor," counseled his protector, *Flatnose*. "He's all right. You c'n buy and he c'n sell."

"Well then, give me some of that famous jelly, of the

best; it is to satisfy a *longing* of my wife's; you understand?"

"I, too. She has a *longin'*, but before you had 'nother. Ha, ha! Gi' me 'nother cup, Don José. . . Fill 'er up!"

The baker took down three or four boxes of the jelly asked for by the storekeeper of Padrón, who stacked them up, but afterwards, said in his most suave manner: "I don't like this; I wish a better kind, the best there is, even if it costs more."

"This is good; look!"

"Probably it is, but, I would like some better."

Don Hilarión—pardon—Don José kept taking down box after box which, after scrutinizing and smelling, the customer refused.

"You see it is for a *longing*!"

"But there isn't anything better."

"Not even for a higher price?"

"No, no matter what you are willing to pay; this is the very best there is," asserted the baker showing signs of impatience.

"Very well, I will take one box, so that my wife will not be too disappointed and, if it is the kind she likes, I will stop in and get some more the next time I come to town. But: 'For bad goods, bad money.' Here, take this lead dollar and give me some good money for it," said Barcala, slapping it down on the counter.

"We do get a lot of bad coins these days," complained Don José, as he picked up the piece and put it into the till without looking at it, and taking out eighty-five cents in good money, handed the change to his customer.

"Good money?"

"Just as good as your dollar."

"I would like it better."

"Oh, get out, man, get out."

"'e's a great joker, 'e is, Don José. Hay! gi' me 'nother cup. Fill 'er up, li'l saint."

Barcala hurried out of the shop without even saying good-night and, as soon as his feet touched the sidewalk, began to run as fast as his legs would carry him, followed by Madeira and Manolito who started after him the instant he appeared with the box under his arm.

When the three heroes who had just gained such a victory, finally found seats in the gallery, the performance was about to begin, but, as the curtain had not gone up, they at once entered into the bantering of their comrades with as much nonchalance as if they had not so lately been sweating at every pore in their struggle to get their entrance fees.

“Ay, you!” interpolated Manolito, opening fire with Javier Flama, sitting a few seats beyond: “Isn’t that *Pepepé* all dressed up in a Prince Albert, over there?”

Pepe was a barber and hairdresser who, through his agreeable personality, had won a place in the city government and, on finding himself elevated to his dignified position in City Hall, had begun to ape the rôle of gentleman, which made him the subject of much teasing by the street gamins and students—practically one and the same.

“Did you ever see anything so rich! *Pepe* in a Prince Albert!”—Imitating the mellifluous tone and servile manner of the barber—“Pointed or rounded?”

The beginning of the performance cut short further ridicule. The play did not appeal to our three friends who, considering they had worked so hard for so little amusement, wished to get back at Don Bartolomé, the producers and the author of the comedy.

At the end of the act, some of the spectators started to pay their respects to friends in other parts of the house. Gerardo came out at the same moment as Augusto. That night, Carmiña was a guest in Don Ventura’s box and the señor Roquer y Paz was on his way to improve his opportunity of having a little chat with her; but, first, he stopped to light a cigarette. From the door of the lobby, he caught sight of Fernández Valiño, half way down the aisle, looking fixedly at the Lozano box, and, just then, he made a reverential bow.

“That gawk makes me tired,” snorted Gerardo to his friend; “and we are going to have a fight some day. I cannot look at Carmen without finding him staring her in the face. I am going over to have a word with her.”

“The old flubdub! Leave him to me. I’ll look after him all right.”

While Gerardo went over to the Lozano box, the officious youth skipped up to the balcony and approached Madeira.

"Ay, you, Maderiña! what you've got to do is to hand one to *Maragota*. He is annoying Gerardo."

"Where is he? I will give him a couple of black eyes all right."

"Hold on, man! Not that here, just now. Send him a couple of shots from the gallery."

"I'll take care of him," intervened Barcala; "*Maragota* is my special pet!"

Just at that moment, the door of Don Ventura's box opened and the eloquent orator, Señor Fernández Valiño, great friend of the Ex-Judge of Órdenes, presented himself. Gerardo was hardly seated before he appeared.

"Whew!" roared the deep voice of Barcala: "The Demosthenes of Faramello!"

Maragota pretended not to recognize the allusion nor understand the laughter and commenced to make his ceremonious salutations.

"My very dear friends!" continued Casimiro in his droll manner, so exactly imitating the voice and tone with which Valiño opened his discourses, that the whole audience laughed uproarously; *Maragota* could not help feeling the ridicule and remained poised half way in the reverential bow he was making to Carmen.

Don Ventura introduced the two rivals who acknowledged the introduction by slight inclinations of the head, and commenced a conversation which taxed the seriousness which Carmiña was trying to maintain under the shower of shots that continued to rain from the gallery; Gerardo and the two other girls with difficulty repressed their smiles.

Valiño, somewhat disconcerted, remarked to the student—meaning to be ironical: "Your friends seem to be in excellently good humor tonight."

"Possibly. I did not ask them," and without taking any further notice of *Maragota* whom Señor Lozano quickly took in tow, Gerardo began to talk to Carmen and Moncha.

When the bell—a piece of metal hanging by a rope, which a stage hand hit with a hammer—struck the third

time, giving notice that the next act was about to begin, the two rivals took their leave and went out of the box together.

"What have you to say to me?" asked Gerardo imper-
tinently when they were fairly outside.

"I have to say to you, that those ruffian friends of yours are uneducated good-for-nothings who don't know how to behave themselves in decent society."

"And I have to answer you, that you better say it to them and to add, that as they are my friends and I am one of them, your remark applies to me as well; I am at your disposition wherever you like, when you like and as you like; this minute, later, tomorrow. . . ."

"Ta, ta, ta! That is not my way of settling things—by a scandal such as you would force upon me. Listen to me: when two men find themselves in a case like this, in which one forgets himself so far as to show himself ill-bred and uneducated in the manners of good society, the other is justified in going his own way. . . ."

"Your way will be to keep yourself away from that young lady and cease persecuting her with your ridiculous attentions."

"As you are not the father, the brother nor even the fiancé of this señorita, I do not recognize your authority to speak to me in this fashion."

"I have the authority of my fists!" retorted Gerardo striking out at his rival; but Valiño caught his wrist and held it firmly, before the blow reached him.

"I think," said firmly and serenely, *Maragota*, "that for the sake of this very person in question, you should avert a scandal which cannot fail to revert on her. For the rest, I have no fear of you, my dear señor, but this is not an affair to be settled by fisticuffs nor swords. I shall never abandon the field for you, and I warn you, you have not gained anything by this affair; I shall not forget your attempt to have me ridiculed in public."

"With your permission—and without it—I laugh at your menaces."

"Very well! 'He who laughs last, laughs best!'" And Fernández Valiño very gravely and dignifiedly went on his way.

Gerardo remained nervously and rabidly biting his cigarette, but he immediately regained his composure—or a part of it—shrugged his shoulders and haughtily and preoccupiedly walked down the aisle clattering his heels, without giving the least attention to the hisses demanding silence. As soon as he was seated, he picked up his opera glasses and directing them toward the Lozano box, riveted them on Carmiña.

On the way, he encountered the fiery eyes of *Maragota*, half closed and defiant focused upon him; he responded with a depreciative grimace.

Then the unsquelched rival also turned toward the box and fixed an intense look on the beautiful girl who was following the play, with all her girlish interest centered on the scene.

VII

After making I do not know how many rough drafts and tearing up an infinite number of sheets of paper, Gerardo wrote a sober and feeling declaration, that very night, to the señorita of Castro Retén. The next morning, in order that it might go directly and be delivered promptly at its destination, he handed it accompanied by a bright, new dollar, to one of Carmen's maids; and, about nightfall, the hour when the domestic usually went to the fountain, our lover was already waiting on the corner for an answer, if there should be any, or, at least, the news from the servant of how his letter had been received by the young lady.

Although the señor Roquer y Paz was sure of a favorable reply—why should he doubt it?—he could not help being impatient nor could he repress a certain emotion as he saw the girl approaching with the water jar on her head. When he accosted her, she seriously and mysteriously took a letter from her bosom and gave it to him.

Imagine the effect upon the Madrileño when he discovered that the letter which she had given to him was his own returned unopened.

"She wouldn't receive it, my lady Carmen," whispered the woman, steadying the water jar with her hand, as she bent toward the dumfounded lover; "and she said, if I took any more from you, she'd discharge me. . . . And besides, she told me to take this one back to you. I'm sorry, I forgot to bring the dollar back with it; I'll bring it tomorrow."

"Is that all she said?"

"Never another word."

"Was she very angry?"

"She looked very serious when I tried to give her the letter, but she said only just what I told you."

"Did you tell her that the letter was from me?"

“Yes, I told her, señor, I told her; but then she shut me right up and wouldn’t let me say another word.”

What a disappointment! It was a terrible blow that the pride of our presuming young friend suffered. What, then, did all that amiability, those smiles, those pleasant words and looks at Don Ventura’s and at all other places where he chanced to meet her, back of which he was sure he had divined sentiments conformable to his desires, mean?

But the worst, the most painful thing, was the disdain with which she treated his advances. What kind of woman could she be to refuse his attentions? And in such a manner, so indelicately—so rudely—to speak plainly. The idea of returning a letter of his without reading it! The coquette! And they said she is so serious, so well educated, so well bred, the pink of propriety! She had had a nice time amusing herself with him! . . . But he would have his revenge.

Yes, he would be revenged; the vengeance of Telemachus . . . Calliope, or was it Penelope or somebody else, he wasn’t very strong on such subjects . . . but, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, etc., etc.

He was already tasting the sweetness of his revenge, beforehand, when there arose in his mind a doubt which offered to his wounded pride a decorous solution.

May I not—he questioned himself—have made a *faux pas* in sending it by the maid? Perhaps, Carmen was angry at that. Very likely, I infringed on some hard and fast rule of etiquette of this country town that is such a stickler for the manners and customs all its own. I ought to have consulted someone before taking this step.

Becoming more and more convinced that this must have been the case, he started in search of one of his friends to confirm him in his opinion. He found Augusto in the Casino, and in a roundabout way, so that his friend might not suspect what had occurred, he tried to verify his solution.

All to no purpose.

“You have written to Señorita Castro and she has returned your letter,” interrupted the sagacious youth, without letting him finish his story; “don’t deny it. It is nothing alarming, that you should have had your letter returned. Do you expect Carmen to say ‘yes’ at once?

There isn't a girl in Santiago, who would do that. It is a matter of custom—of coquetry. The first one is always returned without being opened—although there are many opened on the sly and sealed up again. Let me see yours. No, that hasn't been tampered with. Carmiña is straight goods. You must write another. It is the proper thing to open the second—and answer it with a refusal, not a very flat one—just to encourage insistence. Then a regular correspondence is established with: 'I am so young.' 'I do not care to have a *novio*.'¹ 'Give me some proof of your love,' et cetera, et cetera, until, finally, comes the sweet 'yes.' Anything else would be a great infraction of the fixed rules and regulations which all the señoritas here observe."

"I thought that Carmiña was a woman above such nonsense."

"Here, nobody can be above these things. Unhappy one! Now you have found out what you want to know, you will tell me how you are getting on; eh? Although there is no doubt about it. Good luck to you, my boy!"

Naturally, Gerardo was convinced at once; he wrote a passionate epistle which seemed to him not half bad; the next morning, he went to meet the servant and handed it to her with two dollars, because she refused at first to take it—and, that same night, he got it back again, intact, with this message:

"The señorita said that I was to say to you, it was useless for you to persist in sending her letters, and then, she discharged me; but took me back again on condition that I return the two dollars, you gave me. Here's a dollar and a quarter; I spent the rest and can't pay it back till I get some more money. Don't do it again, señor, don't try to send her another letter; it's no use; and besides, she's going away tomorrow—off to the country with señor. They're going to the *matanza*,² same's they do

¹ Novio, beau, sweetheart; sometimes it means fiancé. There is no word in English which exactly translates *novio*. It is a very pretty word much used in Spanish both in the masculine and feminine—*novio*, the young man; *novia*, the girl.

² Matanza, slaughtering of the cattle which takes place once a year, late in the fall; a task something like sheep-shearing which occurs in the spring.

every year and they won't be back till next month. Here, here's your dollar and here's a quarter; take it; I'll give you the rest when I get it."

Gerardo refused to take the money and went away without saying a word—offended, furious, pained. Wishing to shun human society, he started out by the deserted Fountain of San Antonio, followed the lonely *calle de la Virgen de la Cerca* [Street of the Virgin of the Wall], went up the steep hill of *las Ruedas* [the Wheels] and through the obscure *calle de los Laureles* [Laurel Street] and down to his rooms in "The House of Troy," heaping maledictions on the coquette who had treated him in such a manner. By the time he entered his room, he made up his mind to forget her—to ignore her—that was the most sensible thing to do. Such a day seemed a year.

But, just the same, he dreamt that night of Carmiña Castro Retén and, although, three or four times, he was going to kill her with the paper cutter, he kept for such purposes, he never quite got to the point and always awoke to wonder at his weakness and marvel that the señorita of Castro was still alive after having treated him as she had.

At the same time that the hopes of the Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, became clouded, it came to pass that the sky, also, was overcast—probably out of sympathy—and Compostela donned her saddest dress to receive the water which the clouds prodigiously and indefatigably poured down upon the city.

In Santiago, it does not rain as it does in the rest of the world. There, it is a thing of gravity, obsession, steadfast implacability. It rains unceasingly, without truce, without hope of ever seeing the sun again, one day, the next day, the day after, another, another, and, still another—. Whoever could count them?—sometimes, in a fine persistent drizzle, at others, pouring water in violent showers as if it were trying to empty the clouds into the sad town. The paving stones and the stone houses turn black—or almost black—as soon as the clouds begin to shed their burden onto the town, to put themselves in keeping with the situation, which is the infallible signal

that announces the arrival of the enemy to the soaked Santiaguans.

An atmosphere of mortal gloom invades the city. All cheerful sounds are hushed and nothing is heard but the monotonous, tedious, persistent, ceaseless pouring of the water as it rushes out of the mouths of the enormous gargoyles, with such fury that it spatters so high when it hits the stones, one would think that it were trying to return to the clouds, in order to be poured down again upon the maltreated Compostela.

The only persons seen in the streets, particularly during the first few rainy days, are the students—the majority without umbrellas, muffled up in their capes—hurrying as close to the walls as possible, to and from the University, the café or the boarding houses; the very few men obliged to go out on business; and the peasants who come in from the country, under their huge red umbrellas, done up in their straw capes. The prevailing sound is the clatter of their wooden shoes playing a duet with the water from the spouts.

In the early evening, a handful of valiant ones from near by get out into the main street and walk or stand under the shelter of the porticos. It is an uninviting walk and only men try it; they look at one another with hostile eyes, like passengers on a ship during a long voyage. In some of the houses, the balcony shutters may be opened a bit to permit the inhabitants to watch their neighbors. Sometimes a family is seen surrounding the opening, pointing out the passers by and scathing them with the sharp edges of their tongues.

But, for Gerardo, the bad weather could not come more opportunely. Refused by the señorita of Castro; vanquished by the tedium which came down from the heavens with the rain; shut into his room watching the sheet of water run down the window panes, as his only amusement; having to light the lamp at three in the afternoon and not being able to put it out till noon the next day; he again grew to detest the town and passed the hours cursing everything.

Everything, but more than anything and almost uniquely, Carmaña. We will leave it at that, because, the

maledictions he was hurling at everything were from one and the same cause: Carmen, Carmen, Carmiña. The wound in his pride, his vanity—the poor fellow—was raw and bleeding and he could do nothing but think about it and blaspheme the instrument of his torture, “her.” He wished to execrate her, to abominate her, to banish the thought of her; but the figure of the odious, infamous creature dominated all other ideas—waking or sleeping.

The abhorrent coquette! How she had played with him! What a fool she had made of him! Because, he would have had to be blind indeed, not to see encouragement in her looks, her smiles, her words. Oh the words! What suavity, what melody, what sweetness of accent, what enchantment to hear her speak; but, what deception they covered! It was not for nothing that he had had an aversion to Galicians and a special antipathy for her the first time he saw her! It was a presentiment and his presentiments never deceived him—the vehement impressionable youth. Antipathetic, indeed! Antipathetic and accursed!

At times, he thought more calmly, what was the use of keeping Carmiña constantly in his mind? He excused himself by the assurance that only his hatred and the desire to return the humiliation she had inflicted upon him, kept her ever present in his thoughts.

Suddenly, it occurred to him that it was the city which was responsible for all this misery—this nasty, old, wet, gloomy town teeming with water and boredom; the clouds, the buildings, the people. . . . If his father had known, he would never have sent him to such a frightful, old hole. And satiated with his reclusion without purpose in this dismal place, overcome by seeing the water pour in a continuous sheet down the window panes, his eyes filled with blackness absorbed from the stones of the buildings opposite, he took up his pen and wrote a vehement letter to Don Juan, supplicating him to take his unhappy son out of this frightful dungeon. When he had finished, he started out to post it in person, as if this diligence would aid the success of his supplication, but at the moment he reached the door, there came a terrific shower, as if it had never rained before in Santiago, which obliged the student

to return to his rooms and, as on a previous occasion, he threw himself face down on the bed in despair.

* * * * *

"What's this?" admonished Barcala coming in uncere-
moniously soon afterward and planting himself in front of
the desperate youth: "Another fit of the blues? It's a
bad ailment, Señor Roquer. It seems to me, that, this
time, I smell—this big nose of mine wasn't given me to
no purpose—a little love sickness—worse and more of it.
You shouldn't give away to your feelings like this. You
know the saying about bad weather and a cheerful face."

"I can't help it; I have just written an urgent letter
to my father, begging him to let me get out of this place."

"Good, man! Very, very good! If this would serve to
influence mine, I would ask you to lend it to me."

"And I should be glad to give it to you, for I imagine
that it is just as bad for you and all the other fellows
to be shut up in this abominable, old town as it is for
me."

"Yes, it's a poky old place; but since you have had the
good fortune to embark in Doña Generosa Carollo's ship,
sailing hasn't been so bad; has it? At least, you haven't
felt it so desperately as you did before; have you?"

"It is the rain."

"Oh shucks! Own up to what is as plain as the nose
on your face, little saint. Now you just let me take a
hand in this! There's no reason for you to be so down in
the mouth. Don't look at me so scared. The girl is worth
it; she is pretty enough and good enough and fascinating
enough to make a saint fall in love, to say nothing about a
Madrileño as innocent and inflammable as your honor; but,
caramba! not being a bale of straw, nor looking like one
to her, I venture to say . . . as Don Servando says:
'These are not battles to be won in an hour.' . . . Good-
ness! What do you expect? You come from Madrid with
your neckties, all your suits and canes and overcoats in
the latest fashion—that just drive Samoeiro crazy—play-
ing with the four elegant hairs on your upper lip, and try
to carry off the finest girl in town at once . . . I tell you
what! I'm getting worried; but what difference does that

make? Oh, come on! Brace up, old man! A thing that isn't worth working for, isn't worth having. Stick to it, lad, stick to it! 'Constancy,' Señor Roquer, 'constancy, and the victory will be yours,' as Ramiro tells us in class about every other day."

"Supposing that I am not in love!"

"Ah! No? Good, you say it and I will believe it. I don't know whether you will be able to make yourself believe it or not. While you are trying to convince yourself, let's do something to drive away these blues; no matter how rich you are, no doubt, you would like to be a little richer; I invite you, personally and in the name of my señores comrades, to join a little game we are having up stairs, hoping that you will get Samoeiro's money away from him who, although he doesn't know enough to hold the cards in his hand, is cleaning us all out. What do you think! He began with two dollars and now he's got more than twenty. . . . By the way! if it wouldn't inconvenience you, do me the favor of lending me a dollar or two, to give me a chance to get back what I've lost; that with the eight I already owe you, and don't know when I shall ever be able to pay back, will make ten. You see, I can't go out in this weather to try to borrow it from the problematic Rafaelino of the Siglo."

Gerardo, very willingly, gave Casimiro the two dollars and feeling a bit more light hearted, without knowing why, let himself be led away to Samoeiro's habitation where the game was in process.

It was a large room taking in almost all of the top floor of the house, in which were four beds with their corresponding night cabinets and two washstands—the luxury of bathrooms or even set bowls with running water did not exist there, nor were they missed—still leaving plenty of space for the trunks of the occupants, six Victorian chairs and a long, painted pine table which stood in the center—used by the college boys as a study table, when they had time for such frivolity, which wasn't often—now, cleared of its ordinary cargo of portfolios, combs, books, inkstands, brushes, etc., and turned into a gaming table.

Barcala briefly explained to Gerardo who had never be-

fore mounted to these heights: "These are the bedrooms; these the wardrobes; here are the bathrooms; this is the salón and smoking-room"

None of Doña Generosa's boarders sitting around the table where Samoeiro's torped and lucky hand was turning off the cards, took any notice of Gerardo's entrance, interested as they were in seeing whether a jack or an ace would come up next, with their faces surrounding the money pile in the center, each eager to get what was coming to him when his card should be turned.

"Play!" called out Casimiro in a ringing voice; "Two cents on the jack."

"I won't accept cigarette holders," replied Samoeiro.

"Who told you, señor banker, that I was betting cigarette holders?" retorted Barcala haughtily throwing one of his two dollars onto the table.

"I will change it to avoid dispute later," said Samoeiro putting down the cards. He picked up the dollar with his big, dirty hand and changed it from the heap of silver and copper in front of him, placing the amount bet in the center and handing Barcala the rest, remarking: "I have also taken out four nickels that you owed me, so that makes twenty-two cents."

"It ought to be only twenty cents in all."

"What difference does it make?"

"It makes the difference that you are taking two cents too much."

"It won't make any difference in the end, for I shall get it all back. Here, take it and keep still."

"Keep still? but, I didn't tell you to change it in the first place and it is a breach of confidence to do it without my permission."

"You are very sensitive, Casimiro. Play?"

"One minute," interrupted Gerardo; "may I come in?"

"Yes, man, for as much as you like."

"Then, since there is bank enough, I will put up twenty-five dollars, and here is one more to boot, on the ace."

Samoeiro trembled all over.

"Are you going to bet all that at once?"

"Yes, the whole caboodle."

"You are not going to play that all at once?" he again asked the Madrileño, holding his breath.

"You just watch me."

"We play only for amusement here; you know."

"I am playing for amusement, too."

"But, if I turn two cards like that, I shall be bankrupt."

"Naturally."

"What do you expect, to win all the time, you old quitter?" chimed in one of the others.

"Aw, put up and shut up, *Ostrógoth!*" shouted another.

"I tell you one thing! If you don't stop insulting me, I'll take the bank and clear out."

"You are going to stay right here till we play this out," asserted Marcelino Baamonde; "I'm going to change these three pieces from the jack to the ace and add two more, the last I have; the first three on the ace and these on . . . What card are you going to play for low, Roquer?"

"Not any. Fire away, there!"

"Hold on a second!" called out another. "Here's my last, but I shall win, because I am going in with Roquer. It's a straight tip."

"That's right, too! Change my entry to the ace, Samoeiro," insisted Manolito.

"And mine."

"The same here!"

"And the entry of your humble servant," ordered Barcala; "and I'll put this bright, shiny dollar on top."

The poor jack remained without friends, except for a couple of pieces placed by Casás and one by *Pitouto*.

The third card came up the ace and with it applause and yells to raise the roof, while Samoeiro, livid, began paying out the money with trembling hands.

"Two, four . . . , he began counting from a handful of copper.

"You count straight!"

The banker in spreading out the pile found a silver piece among the copper.

"I've told you that I wouldn't have any hidden bets," blustered the rabid Samoeiro.

"Aw! hand over the money and shut up!"

"Aren't you ever going to let us turn in here?" groaned *Pitouto* throwing himself onto the bed.

"Or study?" complained *Casás*: "And examinations tomorrow! But, I'll go to work, so I can't hear you." And he stopped up his ears and began to study out loud.

"Article eight: They do not transgress, and consequently are exempt from criminal responsibility. . . . They do not transgress, and consequently are exempt from criminal responsibility: first, the imbecile or the insane"

Samoeiro began again to turn the cards and silence reigned in the room, broken only by the monotonous droning of the studious *Casás*.

"Article eight: they do not transgress and consequently . . . 'What cards have you turned up, *Samoeiro*?"

"A six, five, eight . . ."

"Good! 'they are exempt from criminal responsibility: first . . . ' Put a nickel on the five for me. 'When the imbecile or the insane commit . . . ' A six! The devil take it! . . . Can't you go somewhere else to play? 'When the imbecile or the insane commit a crime which the law"

Samoeiro's good luck temporarily eclipsed, began to shine once more in all its splendor. No one gained a card; all lost. Only *Madeira*, more cautious than the others, kept at it with small entries and came out very well. Soon, complaints were renewed and cigarette holders which *Samoeiro* positively refused, began to be put up again.

"Lend me a quarter?" whined *Boullosa*.

"What! to play against me?"

"You, *Barcala*?"

"This is my last that I am saving for the king!"

"You, *Casás*?"

"I? . . . 'Tenth: the deed instigated by insuperable fear . . . ' Now I come to think of it, *Samoeiriño*, I will sell you that necktie, you like so much."

"How much will you take for it?"

"I have worn it only once and it cost me a dollar and a quarter at *Abollo's*."

"I'll give you a quarter."

"Robber! Give me a quarter!"

“Yes; just a quarter.”

“‘Eleventh: the one who commits a crime in obedience to the will of another . . .’ Give me fifty cents?”

“A quarter.”

“Thirty-five?”

“No, thirty.”

“All right; put it on the king.”

“Give me the necktie first.”

Two hours later, Samoeiro had won all the money in the house, except a few pieces of Madeira’s, and much of the clothing, letter paper, cigarette paper and tobacco, besides many of the matches, canes, etc., put up at wicked prices—even Javierito Flama’s wonderful silk hat. A dream! From Roquer, he had taken in some forty odd dollars.

“Well, anyway, I feel in much better temper than I did,” admitted the Madrileño.

“Didn’t you say to me when you began winning: ‘Lucky at cards, unlucky in love?’ Very well, I say to you now: ‘Lucky in love,’ ” remarked Barcala.

VIII

Whether it was on account of Casimiro's words or because sorrow cannot long brood in a twenty-year-old heart or that, among those demons of "The House of Troy," who knew how to happily weather all storms, it was impossible to be dispirited, the fact was that Gerardo recovered in a great measure from this second great fit of blues and no longer shunned human society.

Afternoons, he went to the Casino to play billiards or *tresillo*¹; took part in the games at the boarding house when the *Trojans* got up one; some nights, he went to supper with his *confrères* at the Crechas, to have some of its famous cutlets or to the Melchor for tripe or the tavern of the Masón for cuttle-fish or other equally light delicacies, and, once, even went to the well in the Rúa and lingered about it with a certain air of sadness which gave him—according to the young girls—an interesting appearance. But he went everywhere. He became one of the ring-leaders in all the pranks which his fellow boarders concocted almost every night on getting up from the table, after the ninth or tenth of the month when their allowances were running low and drove them to these escapades, and came to blows—shame to relate!—more than once with the night-watchmen, Manteiga, or the old goat, Moroño, powerful representatives of municipal authority.

And so passed the student's days—or rather nights—till it got to be the last of January. In all this time, he had not spoken of Señorita Castro nor heard her name mentioned, except one day when he and Madeira who had some errand in that part of the town, chanced to walk through the *calle de la Senra*. He would not allow his lips to utter the odious name, Carmiña; but there, in a little corner

¹ Tresillo, a Spanish game of cards played by three persons with a Spanish pack, which is considerably different from an American.

deep down in his heart, still lived the image of the arrogant maiden.

About that time, Casimiro, who was an old fox at such discoveries, found a tavern at the end of San Pedro Street, which had, besides the attraction of a specially well seasoned dish of hake and peas on its menu, the additional charm of being frequented by a certain class of working girls, some of whom were very jolly and pretty. Precisely on the afternoon of February first, Barcala, Armero, Madeiro and Roquer—d'Artagnan and the three musketeers, as they were called—ordered a luncheon to be served on a table out in the garden of the tavern, in the hope that some of these frisky girls might join them, as they had promised after strenuous urging by Barcala. It was to be a profound secret—as profound as any student secret is capable of being.

Early in the afternoon, Augusto and Gerardo started in that direction. The officious Armero improved the occasion to air his ciceronian qualities, giving the history and all the circumstances connected with the places as they went along.

“Here, in Santiago, every stone has its chapter, if not a whole volume, of history. In this old narrow street was the Armenian Hospital. . . . This is All Souls' Chapel. Haven't you ever been in to see the sculpture? You haven't missed anything; it is a fright. . . . This house is called 'The House of the Favorite,' because Doña Leonor Guzmán, the opera singer, favorite of Alfonso VI, lived there. That is the reason this street was named *calle de las Casas Reales* (Street of the Royal Houses). In the Royal Theatre¹ there is a painting representing the cloister of the Convent of Santo Domingo which is the one you can see down below there, where Doña Leonor was a novice—who was destined to become a mistress. . . . You have noticed it in the Opera House; haven't you? Have you heard Gayarre sing there? Stupendous? Eh? . . . They call that *la puerta del Camino*. (The Gate of the Way.) Through that, all the pilgrims must pass, who come to visit the sepulcher of the Apostle. Very good, religious people, but very ragged and smelly. . . . Oh, look here! I just

¹ Royal Theatre, refers to the one in Madrid.

happened to think of it! I am going to show you something interesting."

He took Gerardo over into a little, dirty, steep street parallel with San Pedro, at the bottom of which were some shabby tumble down houses displaying pinwheels and written signs over the doors, which proclaimed them pyrotechnic shops.

All the houses in the street were old, dirty, sordid and reeking with bad odors, dwelling places of miserable wretches who seemed to be trying to get as close to the cemetery as practicable, in the hope of being that much nearer rest. Filthy, ragged children were playing in the gutter; slatternly women were leaning out of the windows.

Augusto, without taking the least notice of the picture, led the way up the short stone steps to the cemetery of Rosario, at the top of which was an arch—now crumbling to ruins—protecting a shrine. "This ogival dates back to the fourteenth century," proffered the well-informed guide. In it, was a statue of the Virgin with the Christ Child in her arms, surrounded by angels and saints. On the other side was an inscription: "Erected for the soul of Juan Tuorum."

In front of the Virgin, was burning an oil lamp; hanging all about, were offerings, testimonies of her power.

"This lamp has been burning without ever having been extinguished, for more than five hundred years; the oil is paid for by the sale of the corn left here by the devout who come to pray to the Virgin. . . . Here used to be a crucifix dedicated to 'Homo santo.' This saintly man was the unhappy Juan Tuorum mentioned in the inscription, a poor fellow, who, in the year thirteen hundred and twenty-something, was condemned to death by the peasants and nobles of that time—ferocious as wild beasts, in those days—because they suspected him of being chief of one of the numerous bands of outlaws that pillaged the country and destroyed villages. Juan Tuorum was innocent, in spite of all the false witnesses to the contrary, and protested his innocence; but they would not listen to him. When he was passing this shrine, he begged permission to pray to this image, which was granted him; he knelt before the shrine and looking up with his whole heart and soul in his

eyes, cried: 'Oh, Holy Virgin, Blessed Mother of God, save me!' and fell dead at her feet. The people believed this to be a demonstration by the Virgin of Juan Tuorum's innocence, and began to scream: 'A miracle! A miracle!' To perpetuate the memory of it, they erected a cross and put this inscription below. The cross was the one which you have seen at the foot of San Pedro Street, to which place it was removed later, for some unknown reason. . . . Interesting; eh?" As they turned to descend the steps, Augusto nudged Gerardo: "Look! See who is down there in the street!"

Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, caught his breath. Doña Segunda and Carmiña Castro Retén were just coming out of one of those old hovels. A poor woman maltreated by years and misery, was bidding them Godspeed from the doorway.

"God bless you señoritiñas and send you as much happiness as you bring to the poor! May the Holy Virgin shower favors upon you! Doña Segunda, may God be with you and all your family! . . . *Miña*¹ Señorita Carmen, saint, dear little saint, good little saint, may our blessed mother of Carmen shield you with her mantle and send you much happiness, for you deserve it, you are so good and pretty, and I will pray to her to send it to you.

"We must go down to speak to them," said Augusto and started off without waiting for any reply from his companion who, naturally, had to follow—without any great reluctance, we may add.

"However did you happen to be out here?" questioned Augusto as he approached the ladies.

"We often come here, but what are you doing in this quarter? No knowing where these by-roads may lead," responded Doña Segunda.

"To no bad place, I assure you, Doña Segundiña. I was just trying to cheer up our friend a bit"—indicating Gerardo—"who is always dispirited, by showing him some of our points of interest, and took him up to see the Virgin of Bonaval."

¹ *Miña*, a very pretty word in the Galician dialect, meaning "my" but carrying an idea of affection with it.

"Good, I am pleased to know you were following no worse trail. We are making the visits assigned to us by the Society of St. Vincent. We have been putting it off from day to day all the week, but just had to make them today, because tomorrow is Saturday and a holiday."

"So it is! Candlemas. Grand ball in the Casino," remarked Augusto; "you are going, of course, Carmiña? And your daughters, too, Doña Segunda?"

"I do not know," answered Señorita Castro; "I have not decided yet."

"But you will decide to go," interrupted the ex-judge's wife: "Why, surely, my girls are going; there would be some trouble in the house if they were not. They have been teasing their father to use his influence to have this ball ever since he was put on the Casino committee. Ventura wished to have some scientific lecture or other; I do not know what. . . . Some of his notions. But they just tormented him till he gave it up to keep them quiet, and they are tickled to death."

"If you go, Carmiña, you must not forget to save a little dance for me," said Augusto.

"With pleasure; which do you prefer, a waltz or a *rigodón*?"

"A *rigodón*, if you do not mind."

"Very well; it is very fatiguing."

"Now, don't you make fun of my obesity. Will the *rigodón* be a very long dance? To prove that it is not for the reason you think, I will claim a waltz too."

"Good, the first."

"No, the last; you never get there in time and the one who takes the first dance gets left."

Then Gerardo, who up to this point had maintained a serious, dignified silence, feigning an indifference which he did not feel—*Christo!* but she is pretty with that mantilla kissing her face, in that simple black dress, which makes her look like one of Zuloago's paintings—spoke to Carmen.

"If I were not afraid of displeasing you, I would claim the same privilege as my friend Armero."

"Of displeasing me? Why? On the contrary, I shall be much pleased to reserve a dance for you. . . . I must be going now."

She hesitated long enough to give him such a look with those serene, lustrous eyes which still showed traces of tears shed in the hovel for the sorrows of the poor woman, that it penetrated his very soul, dispersing the clouds of gloom which had so long overshadowed his heart and mind, with the sweetness of its caress; it was with great difficulty that he could control himself sufficiently to say more or less calmly: "I hope you may decide to go to the ball."

"Indeed, she will go," Doña Segunda assured him. "If your father does not care to escort you, you shall go with us." Turning to Gerardo in a maternal manner she remarked: "What have you been doing all this time? It is so long since you have been to our house."

"I have not been feeling very well lately."

"Aren't you acclimated yet?" inquired Señorita Castro in a tone which left Gerardo uncertain whether she was serious or making fun of him.

"They will not let me; they do not wish me to become acclimated. There are so many things here hostile toward me."

"The idea!" exclaimed Doña Segunda who caught none of his subtle allusions: "Everyone in Santiago is most hospitable to strangers, particularly to students. It is your homesickness for Madrid which keeps you so blue. I suppose you have left some sweetheart behind you there."

"I left no one there, Doña Segunda. I swear to you by all I hold most sacred!" vehemently and persuasively replied Señor Roquer y Paz. "Neither in Madrid nor in Santiago is there anyone who thinks of me," he added in a sentimental tone which was very becoming to his words.

The ladies began to say good bye; they must be on their way; for, they explained, they had a great deal to do.

"You will go to the ball tomorrow night?" supplicated more than asked, as he gently pressed Carmiña's hand, the worried Gerardo.

"Perhaps. I think so."

"Then a waltz?"

"A waltz."

The visitors went into another house and the young men continued down the street.

"How can I get to the main street without being liable

to meet them again?" asked Gerardo after a few steps.

"But, we are going to the tavern at the end of San Pedro."

"You, yes; I, no. I have some errands to do; I must buy several things for tomorrow night."

"Ah, yes! I know what is the matter with you. And you try to make out that you are not crazy about her. . . . I wish you good luck, my boy."

"Do you really think there is any chance of luck for me?"

"A blind man probably would not have seen the look she gave you."

"So you think . . .?"

"You want me to tickle your ears. . . . Come, let us go through here to San Pedro."

They went down a steep alley which one would not believe it possible could exist in a city.

"I know how to go from here," said Gerardo as they came out into San Pedro: "You go find Barcala and Madeira."

"The idea! I will go with you."

"No, Augusto, I am not so selfish as to wish to deprive you of your pleasure. Besides, I may as well tell you frankly, I should prefer to be alone."

"As you like. If you wish, I should be very glad to go with you; friendship first! If not, I thank you and will go find the boys."

They separated. With a heart full of hope and with more buoyant spirits than he had known for many a week, he retraced the way he had taken on a certain day two months before feeling so desperate; then he turned his footsteps towards the Herradura and, as once earlier in the season, sat down on a bench from which he could take in the full beauty of the view of the Pontevedra highway, the woods of Conjo and the fields of Vidán.

The setting sun amorously kissed all this beauty, bidding it good bye till another day.

"That is glorious!" exclaimed Gerardo, out loud, taking in the whole scene as far as eye could reach.

He felt a happy optimism pervade his whole being.

IX

It was a sight worth seeing, that of the most ferocious wild animals of Generosa Carollo's menagerie, in all their correct paraphernalia—dress suits, boiled shirts, patent leather pumps—waiting in the corridor of the Casino among the other escorts, to take the ladies into the ball room; now walking about rigidly for fear of cracking their shirt fronts or wrinkling their suits, then again forgetting themselves.

Whoever would dream that these were the noisy carousing, provocative students one had seen scuffling with the highly respectable but little respected police or night watchmen in the middle of the city streets?

"They're the very same ones!" muttered the terrible Manteiga to his less powerful companion, *Cabalo*, who were stationed at the door, muffled in their regulation *carriks* and wide brimmed hats pulled down to their eyebrows; each with his formidable *garrote*, symbol of his night labors, in hand.

"The rascals, they ought to be taken to the *Falcona* and given a good thrashing."

Indeed, they made a good appearance, but it had cost them much trouble. All the afternoon and early evening, "The House of Troy" had been a boiling pot. They came in, they went out, they went up and came down, asking this and asking that—holding twenty consultations per minute. Javier Flama and Gerardo Roquer were their authorities and they overwhelmed them with questions.

"Is this necktie in style?"

"Where do you carry your handkerchief?"

"And your gloves?" put in Samoeiro. "Where do you carry your gloves?"

"On your ears," answered Barcala.

"I mean, do you put them on before you get there or afterward?"

“Oh, go along out of here, robber.”

One by one, Javierito and Gerardo examined their shirts, their neckties, their handkerchiefs. . . . And then, after they were all dressed, they held a review—like sergeants inspecting their soldiers—at the door before letting the boys go out into the street. Particularly Madeira, Boullosa and Samoeiro, who considered this one of the great events of their lives—the first time they had ever put on dress suits—were insufferable.

But, this was not all; the boys from other houses—the “*Vizcína*,” Doña Concha’s, the “*Conga*”—came for advice; till Javier Flama, practical man, although he was born in Redondela, ended by putting a price on his answers and formally declared that, from that time on, he would not pass his judgment for less than ten cigarettes.

The only tranquil person in the house was old *Cañotas*, the celebrated bootblack, orator and philosopher, who cleaned boots “à la Paris or à la Barcelona” as he cried through the streets, to get the better of his odious competitor, *Merlo*, who knew how to clean them only “à la Parisienne.”

Seated on one of the steps of the stairs with his blacking box and brushes and an old candle-stick with the end of a lighted candle by his side, a mass of shoes heaped on the stair above, the stair below and all the other stairs, *Cañotas* was cleaning shoes and indulgently and complacently watching the comings and goings of the students.

“Sure thing,” he soliloquised, as was his custom; “young people are never so serious as when they’re gettin’ ready to amuse themselves.”

Confirming him in his opinion, a pair of shoes came flying down the stairs, landing dangerously near, and a voice calling after them: “What kind of looking shoes are those, *Cañotas*? I’ll murder you!”

“No one dies till God wills it. Don’t worry, Señor Madeira. Your shoes ben right clean, but I do um agin. Nob’dy like *Cañotas* for that. You jest look at those what *Merlo* do dis night an’ you see.”

And he began to sing a song of his own the words of which were some lines that Barcala wrote under a caricature of him in the newspaper:

“Cañotás, a bootblack is he,
He gives the best shine there can be;
His boots are so clean and so bright,
You can walk by their light in the night.”

The supper that night was served early and was hurried and scanty; during the meal, the boys talked of nothing but the ball. Those who were not going, got their fun in teasing the others.

“After all your trouble, maybe you will find yourselves all dressed up and nobody to dance with. . . .”

“I went into Abollo’s—he knows everything that ever happened, happens or is going to happen in Santiago—and I heard him tell someone that the girls were going to do what they did last year, not go near the Casino.”

“Is that possible?” asked Gerardo in alarm.

“No, don’t you listen to him,” comforted Barcala: “That is just his little joke.”

“Joke? It wouldn’t be the first time. Besides, the girls are afraid the boys might try to get back at them for what they did last year.”

“I don’t know who is the worse off,” said Manolito: “We poor fellows waiting around for them in the cold vestibule of the Casino or they sitting all dressed over their braziers at home waiting for the order of their going, which may not come all night.”

“This is one of their foolish customs here; nothing more nor less than one of those ridiculous fashions of a provincial town. Just imagine, Gerardo, no young girl wishes to be the first to present herself at the ball, because she is afraid they will think she is anxious to dance. We all know they are anxious to dance or else they wouldn’t come at all. And why shouldn’t they be? Is there anything wrong about it? So, not to make the grave mistake of being first, they send their fathers or uncles or brothers or a servant to watch and notify them when two or three families have arrived.”

“And last year, to avoid being the first . . .”

“Exactly; they all stayed at home. That will not happen again tonight, because they have arranged to go in groups. So, when there are several together, the disgrace

is divided and does not fall so heavily on any one. The Bergondinos, the Agrairas, the sister-in-law of the Registrar and I don't know who else, are going to meet at the Osedos; the *Cuentagotas*, the President's daughters and the cross-eyed Pelouro—haven't you ever noticed how the homeliest ones always attach themselves to the prettiest and so make themselves all the more conspicuous?—are going with Josefina Rubianes.

She of the golden hair,
Whom the very sun doth envy.

The Lozanos, *Fiogordo*, Señorita *Simpleton*—asking Samoeiro's pardon—and Señorita Castro Retén will form another crowd. . . . And so on; you see, it will be a great ball."

And, indeed, it was, this ball given by the Casino de Caballeros [Gentlemen's Club] of the City of Santiago de Compostela on that Saturday night of the second of February, the day of the Purification of the Virgin. "Very early"—according to the society news of the Galician Gazette—"began to arrive many brilliant and select groups from the cream of society; ladies, the charm and pride of the city, dressed in the most elegant and latest Parisienne mode, shone in the spacious, yellow salón of the aristocratic Casino in the Rúa del Villar like the rays of the summer sun in the midst of the dull days of our rainy winter."

Not just on time, but half an hour later or maybe three-quarters—perhaps we would better say an hour, to be sure not to fall into error; enough to alarm the young men waiting in the vestibule—the groups began to arrive, as Barcala had announced.

When they saw them coming, the fifteen or twenty young men on the reception committee straightened up their already straight bodies, pulled on their cuffs until there was danger of ripping out their shirt sleeves, twirled their moustaches—those who possessed one of those heavenly gifts—struck their most interesting poses, looked out of the corner of their eyes in the mirror to see the effect, and gallantly approached to receive them; presented them with

dance orders and offered their arms, escorting them in a slow procession up the "brilliantly lighted"—according to the Gazette, alluding to the one gas chandelier which was lighted only on these solemn occasions, for gas had but lately been introduced—stairway.

One of the directors of the Casino was always made chairman of the reception committee—not that on this occasion they needed any directing—usually the youngest, so, this year, the lot fell to the señor Don Octavio Fernández Valiño, better known as *Maragota*, which was a source of irritation to Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, who told his friends Barcala, Armero and Madeira, on no account, in case that he should be taking someone else up stairs when Señorita Castro Retén arrived, to allow *Maragota* to give his arm to that young lady.

"Don't you worry. We will see to that; and, besides, even if he did, she wouldn't take it."

Speaking of angels—just at that moment, that one appeared in company with Elvirita Briay, Doña Segunda and her two daughters. You ought to have seen the deep bow which Samoeiro made.

At the sight of Señorita Castro, Fernández *Maragota* hurriedly advanced in a very decided manner and inclined himself in such a profound bow—a regular reverence of the royal chamber—that when he straightened himself, offering his arm to Carmen, he found Barcala, Gerardo and Augusto already offering theirs.

"Thank you all very much," graciously acknowledged the beautiful girl: "you are very gallant," and with an air of attaching no importance to the act, took Augusto's arm.

Gerardo then gave his to Filo, and Barcala took Moncha in tow, who pinched the unprepared Casimiro's arm so that it made him wince; this left *Maragota* to take charge of Doña Segunda—Elvirita already having gone up with Samoeiro.

After having left the ladies at the dressing room door, Augusto, Barcala and Gerardo turned to Fernández Valiño and laughed in his face. He gave them one of his superior glances and resorted to his favorite expression: "He who laughs last, laughs best."

"I advise you never to laugh," counseled Barcala: "for laughing makes you homelier than ever."

Fortunately, the *sortie* of the ladies cut short the onslaught. The gentlemen took them into the ball room where they were hardly seated, before they were surrounded by a bevy of young larks demanding their dance orders.

Gerardo wrote his name against a waltz and a rigodón.

"With your permission," as he returned the card.

"You are very ambitious."

"Very."

The sextet, from the depths of the gallery, began to play a waltz, one of those enchanting, slow, dreamy waltzes which one never forgets and is recalled years after youth has fled, with tears in the eyes and a tremor in the voice—one of those one can never resist humming.

At the sound of the music, the crowd in the center of the room dispersed. It was a large hall with walls set with mirrors in gilt frames and followed by a double row of yellow damask, stuffed sofas and easy-chairs; the mammas and other chaperons occupied the back row and the young girls were in front impatiently waiting for their partners to make their correct bows before them and lead them off into the delights of the waltz. The men who did not dance stood around the doorways or took refuge in the "lions' cage" [card room].

The girls who were not invited to dance, smilingly feigned indifference; although some of them felt like crying, they continued to laugh and talk. Perhaps they felt disdainfully toward the others. . . . Pardon them in their sorrow. They had joyfully dressed for the ball and admired themselves in the glass, believing their gowns the most elegant—and here they were posing as wallflowers.

At length, the orchestra sounded the hour of Gerardo's waltz. The first strains stirred his emotions and then, he felt a certain disquietude. He crossed the hall as indifferently as possible, a little pale, a bit nervous. When Carmiña saw him coming, she slightly blushed and began to fan herself very rapidly. On arriving in front of her, he made a graceful bow and said in a pleasant voice with just a suspicion of *tremólo*:

“This is our waltz, señorita.”

She rose without a word, giving him one hand to hold in his and permitting him to put the other around her waist. They began to turn rhythmically, gravely, silently. . . . Oh, the divine pleasure of the first dance with the woman one loves!

The dancing couples at this select ball were not numerous, but were all good dancers. They prided themselves on their waltzing in Santiago de Compostela. They had a custom of dancing a few at a time, the others forming a circle around. The ring watched the dancers with interest and showed their approbation by applause when the couples stopped to let others take their turn.

For a minute or two, Gerardo abandoned himself to the sweet emotion of guiding that light body, putting his whole soul into holding Carmiña in his arm, so fearful was he that she would vanish.

The exertion of dancing had painted Carmen's cheeks a deep pink and her curls, the coquettish curls fringing her forehead, played tantalizingly to the rhythm of the music.

Finally they began to talk, but the student who had been preparing a flowery, eloquent and persuasive discourse ever since the night before, could think of only the commonplace compliment:

“You dance marvelously!”

Was it not deplorable?

They kept on dancing and Gerardo felt a great irritation at his timidity and stupidity in not being able to think of anything to say. It was during their last turn, when they had escaped from the circle and were waltzing at will, without any preamble, circumlocution or eloquence, the simple words seemed to burst out of their own accord, giving them more force:

“Carmen, Carmiña, I love you with all my heart and soul!”

She made no answer, but the pink in her cheeks deepened, her breath came more quickly and the long lashes shading her beautiful eyes, trembled.

His timidity once overcome, the words flowed from Gerardo's mouth in a stream—rather incoherently to be

sure; but what of that? The devil take that speech so laboriously prepared! One by one, the lover related the stages in the growth of his love; the impression he received that memorable afternoon at Don Ventura's; the effect of the songs; the pain of her repulses; the days he remained shut up in his room; his desperation; his joy, his hope and his fear of this present happy hour; all. He, himself, who had never stopped to analyze his own sentiments, was surprised at their depths.

At the end of this waltz, came intermission and Gerardo after walking slowly around the hall with his partner—thus setting the seal to his fate—sat down by her side without taking any notice of the looks of curiosity cast in his direction. For him at that moment, there existed nothing but this woman who was silently listening, but watching him intently, wishing to discover in the most secret recesses of his eyes the truth of these beautiful, passionate words.

What anguish! It was a difficult task for Carmiña to control herself. How much she would have liked to speak out with frankness, confidence and trust. She was incapable of hypocrisy; to her, love was not a play, a pastime; she believed that a woman should give her heart but once; before giving it, however, she should consider carefully, not to spoil her whole life. . . . Carmiña was not sure of the love which the student was painting in such vivid colors.

“Now do not get angry, but listen to me calmly. We hardly are acquainted with each other, and, even supposing that this love which you declare so ardently, were true and not a passing fancy with which the necessity of distraction in this provincial life is deceiving you, or, possibly, the desire of something to obliterate from your mind some other love. . . . No, no! let me finish. Although it may not be either of these, but a real passion which you feel for me; how do you know, after you have seen more of me, that it will not change?”

“Never! I am sure that I am perfectly acquainted with you, as you are with me. . . .”

“Ah! precisely for that reason. . . . You are a man who has led a high life in Madrid; I am a poor little country girl. . . .”

The arrival of refreshments cut short the conversation. Waiters accompanied by members of the committee were passing trays of ices and sweets to the ladies who accepted them graciously—more than one helping. The young men were talking and laughing and a spirit of good cheer pervaded the hall.

“This is the best part of the whole thing,” declared Augusto Armero.

In the *rigodón*, Gerardo tried to renew his suit as best he could by the disconnected words which the figures and close proximity to others permitted, but did not succeed in convincing Señorita Castro.

“I do not know what to say to convince you of my sincerity or win your confidence. I will do anything to win you. . . . Shall I throw myself from yonder tower? Set fire to the city? So that, by tomorrow morning, all the citizens of Santiago would be ready to serve as roasts. . . . I, myself, converted into a baked *tortilla*?”

She laughed and seemed to soften a bit. She did not say the anxiously awaited “yes,” but asked more substantial and practical proofs. Gerardo must understand that neither his previous life in Madrid nor his present of truancy and idleness were very reassuring to any serious minded young lady, however much fire he might put into his words.

He protested. The report of his life in Madrid had been greatly exaggerated; true, he had not been a saint, but not a devil as black as he was painted; in fact, now, he had become a poor, sincere penitent; as to his life in Santiago, surely, it had been spotless.

“Oh, really?” she interrupted him: “The life of a saint, indeed! What of these late suppers, these street fights, this gambling in the boarding house, the little dress-makers in San Pedro Street . . .?”

“Except for the dressmakers, which is a downright lie, the other things do not count; all students have to have some fun and nobody thinks anything about it; but, who keeps you informed to the least detail, about everything I do?”

At first, she was a little confused, but quickly recovered herself: “Santiago is so small and everybody knows every-

one else's business; one cannot help it, whether one wishes to or not. Here, we all live in transparent houses with our lives exposed to the view of our neighbors."

"The walls of my house can expose only my innocent conduct without other stain than some student pranks."

"How indulgent you are with yourself! Even if all those things are innocent amusement, how do you excuse your idleness, your lack of attendance at classes? How do you excuse yourself for not studying?"

"Is that the reason I am so low in your estimation? Is that what holds back that much desired 'yes'? If it is, I will set to work like the very Dickens; I'll outstrip the seven wise men of Greece to get that 'yes.'"

"I will even go to class if you insist. You have but to command and I shall obey. I do not care a flip about my degree and, when I get it, I shall not make any use of it; but I wish to prove to you of what I am capable to win your love. Probably, it would be easier to throw myself from the tower, as I suggested, but if you prefer that I become a sage, a sage I will be. I will go to class every single day; I will study like a fiend; I will buy a broad brimmed hat and a long cloak with big pockets and fill them with books and papers and notebooks. . . . But now, 'Carmen, pretty Carmen, good Carmiña, saintly Carmiña,' as your poor call you, be a little charitable toward me, tell me that you believe in my love. . . ."

"Let me see you go to studying first. . . . It will make your father very happy."

"How about you?"

"You study."

"Very well, as you request it, I will study; and you will reward me? 'A reward of merit.' I am going to interpret your words to conform to my desire and make of them a promise to substitute the doubt which has made me desperate."

It was a long time since the *rigodón* had finished and now the sextet was beginning a waltz. Another partner came to claim Carmiña, but Gerardo felt too sentimental to dance with anyone else, so went off to the "lions' cage" for a smoke.

"Good luck?" inquired Casimiro.

"I don't know. I am not sure whether it is yes or no."

"Yes, my boy, yes. Moncha says that she and Carmen talk about you all the time, because Carmen is so interested in everything you do. You can draw your own conclusions."

The ball continued merrily till nearly six o'clock in the morning. Gerardo managed to get another dance with Carmaña, thanks to Augusto who gave him one of his.

"What will people say, seeing me dance with you so many times?" protested Carmen.

"What is the use in giving a thought to others when we ought to think only of ourselves? I wish this night would never end; that this waltz were eternal. . . ."

"What foolishness!"

"Won't you permit me this lunacy? Do indulge me, for the insane are often happy in the belief of their fancies."

"No; I wish you to keep your head, so that you may remember in years to come that true, country maid who was a good friend to you and counseled you well."

"Ah! You do not wish me to forget her?"

"No . . . No, do not ask me any more questions, Gerardo; no, don't; leave me, I beg you, leave me."

The music ceased. He still insisted:

"Give me that camelia you are wearing, as a memento of this never-to-be-forgotten night?"

She did not answer, but, later, as she was going down the stairs wrapped in an elegant evening cloak which set off her figure to even greater advantage, on Gerardo's arm, she slyly passed him the flower which had reposed on her bosom all the evening. The student kissed it fervently before putting it into his buttonhole.

"What are you doing?" she whispered in alarm.

"Nobody is looking at us. Everyone is occupied with his own happiness, enjoying the last few minutes of this wonderful night."

Gerardo escorted Carmaña to the very edge of the portal without releasing her hand from his arm. The early morning was very chilly, but Gerardo was not conscious of the cold.

“Oh, please go in! You will take cold.”

“I haven’t time to take cold; I have too much studying to do.”

Afterward, he went to supper—or shall we say breakfast—with his friends in the delicatessen shop next to the Casino. He absorbed in his own thoughts, talked little, hardly giving attention to what the others were relating in an incoherent manner concerning their varied experiences at the ball.

“Do you know?” Augusto said to him: *Maragota* got Don Ventura to ask Carmen if she would let him write his name on her card for a dance.”

“And what did she say?”

“She said it was full.”

The cathedral clock was just striking seven when they came out. The city slept. The street lamps had been extinguished and the faintest suspicion of dawn made everything appear in a queer light. Every once in a while, the silence was interrupted by the distant clatter of wooden shoes. On their way to the Cathedral, some women with black shawls over their heads and rosaries in their hands were hurrying along. They were silently gliding rather than walking, as close as possible to the walls. Some other women were returning from an earlier mass at San Francisco.

Casimiro and Gerardo entered the Cathedral by the door on the Platerías [street by that name] to make a short cut through to the Azabachería. A beggar, his face covered with sores and his nose half eaten away by leprosy, mechanically whining his petition, raised the heavy portière which was for the purpose of keeping out the cold, and, as soon as the students had passed, let it fall and returned to his dispute with two pilgrims huddled in the doorway. The damp air not quite so cold as that of the street seemed rather grateful to the faces of our friends under the lofty arches of the Roman temple.

Through the wide naves, were coming and going many figures, at first, almost indistinguishable by the early morning light which filtered through the stained glass windows. Kneeling in front of the main altar where the flickering lights of the huge silver lamps continuously illuminated

the argent statue of the Apostle, conqueror of the Moors, could be descried a number of women praying with their arms crossed on their breasts, each with a rosary hanging from her right hand which kept slipping the beads one by one. Some were saying their prayers out loud. A few, after finishing their orisons, humbly kissed the floor. An old woman from the country was painfully crawling along on her knees and kissing the floor between each prayer, probably in fulfillment of a vow. From a corner, came the profound sigh of some soul in distress sending up a petition, the solution of which could come only from on high.

Walking half sidewise, making his obeisance before all the altars and bowing to everyone, passed near the students, wrapped in his long cape, a señor whose face consisted of a bunch of red whiskers, a nose and a pair of spectacles.

“That is Jesusiño, *the Bassoon*,” proffered Casimiro; “a good soul who comes every morning and spends the whole forenoon hearing masses till the hour of the organ concert arrives, when he accompanies the friar organist, and all the afternoon in the music shop reading music. There is an enviable, simple, happy life reduced to the fewest possible distractions, his organ, his bassoon, his sheet music and his salutations. Think of the people killing themselves for the vanities of this world! I wrote some verses about him once, just for fun, in the Galician dialect. Jesusiño had died and was timidly approaching the gates of heaven with his bassoon and his music under his arm. On arriving, he knocked trembling with fear. “Here comes Jesusiño!” joyfully exclaimed Saint Peter, but when he opened the gate, he put on a ferocious expression which just about finished the poor soul. “What do you bring?” questioned the celestial gate-keeper. “Sins, señor.” St. Peter was regaling himself with a Wagnerian harmony of crystal and silver bells accompanied by the laughs of angels who surrounded him. Jesusiño was terror-stricken for a moment. “Enter, blessed one, enter!” at last ordered St. Peter. Jesusiño hesitated and timidly asked the fisherman of Galilee: “May I bring in my bassoon and music?” “You may, man, you may; and we will even grant you permission to give a concert once in a while.” “And may I go down to

the Cathedral sometimes to hear mass and the organ?" When he was answered in the affirmative, he meekly entered into the glory of heaven with his bassoon and music under his arm, bowing to everyone he met. I think they were rather good, but I never dared to publish them, so, finally, I destroyed them."

The acolytes still sleepy, were striking the bells at several of the chapel entrances to notify the devout that the holy communion was about to be celebrated. Almost all those kneeling before the high altar rose and hurried towards the chapels.

The students crossed the apse, always obscure and even more so at this hour. In one of the chapels, a priest was saying mass; leaning on a beautifully carved lectern and reading from an old missal, he was intoning the Gregorian canticle; from time to time, he would straighten up and tighten the cord of the cape he was wearing on top of a heavy woolen coat, give another twist to the scarf around his neck, blow on the ends of his fingers protruding from a pair of woolen mittens, without ceasing to chant, and stamp his feet on the floor to warm them. A praying statue of an archbishop was hearing the mass in a state of ecstasy.

Casimiro explained to Gerardo:

"This is the chapel of Our Lady of the White Lily or of the Magistral or of Doña Mencía; it is called by all three names. Doña Mencía of Andrade, who was its founder, left a trust fund which yields some seven or eight hundred dollars; this interest is to be spent to have a daily mass and six high masses during the year said for her soul. Today is the date of one of the high masses and here you have the good *Piporriño* pouring forth the mass and enduring the cold for a few dollars."

But Gerardo did not hear what he said; his attention was fixed on the figure of a woman who, after having made a very short prayer in front of the Apostle, was going towards the nave of *Solitude*.

"Did you notice that woman, Casimiro? I could swear that it is Carmen."

"It is very possible. Today is Sunday and many of

the girls will change their dresses and fulfill their duty of attending mass before going to bed. It is a very convenient custom, for then they can sleep as long as they like. I saw the Lendoiro girls enter as we came in."

"Let us go over to the *Solitude*."

"Yes; but, on the way, let us pay our respects to the noted Mateo. I tell you it is a sin to come into the Cathedral without going to look at the *Portico de la Gloria* by the sublime hands of the master."

Kneeling in front of the altar of the Virgin, beside one of the great columns, her supplicating eyes fixed on the image of the *Dolorosa*, was Carmen. What was she asking?

She had on the same black dress which she was wearing Friday afternoon when Gerardo met her, and her face was half hidden by the lace of her mantilla. She was still more beautiful than in her ball gown of silks and tulles, or, at least, she appeared so to her lover who, in order not to be seen, had crept into a niche in the wall near a closed confessional, after whispering to Casimiro:

"You go on; don't follow me."

Carmaña did not see them; her whole attention was given to the Virgin. From his point of vantage, Gerardo could watch her fervently beseeching the Mother of all with a look so intense that he was touched to the heart, feeling sure, he was the object of this appeal. He felt a strong temptation to go to her, but was discreet and controlled his desire. He let her finish her prayers in peace and saw her go away thoughtfully and gravely; then he went to find Barcala whom he could hear walking about in the *Portico de la Gloria*, distracting from her matins a young country girl who with her fingers placed in the five holes worn into the marble column of the Virgin by the millions of hands put there during all these pious centuries, was sending to heaven her five Ave Marias.

"Look, my boy!" said the poet enthusiastically to his friend: "I am never tired of wondering at this marvelous work of art. I feel like crying, *Viva Mateo!* Look at those draperies! Look at the expression on those faces! What delicacy! What coloring!"

Pointing out the old men of the Apocalypse and the

angelic players surrounding the Saviour, he began to recite ardently Rosalía's immortal lines, much to the scandal of those awaiting their turn in front of the confessional:

“Behold! Their lips appear to move
And from on high begins the music;
They touch their glorious instruments.
Are they living or are they stone,
Those likenesses so true to life?
How marvelously are the tunics wrought!
Those eyes are brimming o'er with truth!”

“See that little face of a child laughing so ingenuously! That is Saint Daniel, Saint Danieliño. I have been told that he was originally laughing at the opulent breast of Ester, that other saint opposite, and, one day, the city government ordered it cut off, leaving the saint as you see her: *Tanquam tabula rasa*. . . .”

“Come, come, Casimiro,” interrupted Gerardo: “I am not in the mood for these things.”

“Ah! man, barbarian, egoist! Because you are happy, you have no eyes to admire the works of genius. I can tell you, if I were not so sleepy, I would stay here the whole morning. . . . But I am just about ready to drop. Adiós, little saints!” And, turning to the statue of the master sculptor in an attitude of perpetual adoration behind his masterpiece, he saluted with a friendly gesture. “Pardon, Mateo. I cannot linger longer with you today.”

* * * * *

When Carmiña Castro Retén got back to the house, her father was already up. They kissed each other affectionately.

“Run along to bed, dear. Did you have a good time?”

“Yes, papa. . . . I have something to tell you. Gerardo Roquer proposed to me.”

“And what did you say to him, my dear?”

“I ought to have said yes, because he put so much warmth into his declaration and swore so vehemently that he loved me; but I told him, that I was only a distraction to help him pass the time of his enforced stay in Santiago. . . .”

“You gave him the refusal which he merited.”

“No, papa. . . . I did not have the courage. He talked so persuasively—so sweetly—I asked him to prove his love for me by changing his life. . . . Do you think he will change? Do you think he spoke the truth? I hope that he did. . . . For, I like him very much. . . . Do you think it is possible, that he can really love me?”

Don Laureano smiled kindly.

“I think that you are worthy of having a man love you. But run along, my child, and have a good sleep.”

He kissed her and she hurried away, so that her father would not see the tears which sprang to her eyes.

X

He studied; yes, indeed, he studied. 'At first, it was very difficult for him to apply himself; but, presently, his pride which is one of the dominating traits in the character of our hero, came to his rescue and made him put his mind onto his books, for he always wished to be first in everything he undertook to do.

The thing he hated most in his new life was attending classes. Those five mortal hours shut up in class rooms, without any rest, except the few minutes between the periods, spent in joking and laughing or singing, seemed interminable and put a damper on the studious ardor of the first days and he sometimes had recourse to a novel or fixed his eyes on the professor, feigning an attention which he was far from giving to his tiresome words; the student's thoughts were roaming afar in the rosy clouds of illusion. The science of law seemed to him the most arid, absurd and arbitrary of all the sciences. The same law meant black or white according to the interpretation which was changed to fit the case.

He defined law as a great machine, a diabolical machine made to ensnare and injure people.

Once in a while he played truant like any school boy and went with Augusto who was the worst in the University for taking cuts, or with Madeira who was always ready, to enjoy an hour of sunshine in the Herradura. It was usually during Don Servando's period; he never made the roll call and often spent several days in succession reading Latin to the pupils, to demonstrate to them why he abominated the decrees of the Supreme Court, which were the *bête noire* of this learned and humoristic professor.

"Did you understand any of that gibberish?" he would ask the class. "Neither did I. This decision is like one of those baskets of fish they send from Carril, from which

one begins by pulling out seaweed, then seaweed and some more seaweed and, at last, at the bottom of the basket one finds a small sardine. And rotten! You must undeceive yourselves, señores, the people can never be happy till their laws can be written in a book of cigarette paper. . . . Ha, ha!”

Don Servando had other oddities. One morning when he took off his overcoat in the class room, much to the amusement of the students, he appeared in a dress suit. He explained to them:

“I see that this innovation in my attire is a shock to you. Ha, ha! There is no need to be so astonished; the reason is very simple—like all great discoveries. As my friends committed the foolishness of electing me to the council, I had to appear with my colleagues New Year’s and, naturally, I had to buy this outfit, but as they failed to reëlect me, and, as I do not go to the Casino balls nor have to preside at any functions, like my illustrious friend, *Pepepé*, who does it so admirably, I have no further use for this dress suit, so I have decided to wear it out in class. You cannot conceive how this darned table interferes with these cuffs. I think I shall become so pleased with myself in this rig, I shall forswear a common suit altogether. . . . Ha, ha! And now, having satisfied your curiosity with this brief discourse on domestic-university economy, you may listen to my lecture on the topic of the day—if you choose. Ha, ha!”

The other professors were not so peculiar; neither were they so learned. Don Ramón Peña, Angelito Pintos, Ramiro, Don Cleto and Don Adolfo understood the art of teaching and knew how to make their pupils study. They limited their lectures to clear explanations given in practically the same words year after year, but the period was often cut short by their being twenty or thirty minutes late. It was their custom to devote the first half of the hour to questioning the students, which was a great bore, although the result was sometimes amusing to the class, especially when one of the country bumpkins whom all the years of university training had not succeeded in polishing nor curing of embarrassment, was being tormented. It was a real *show* to the other boys to witness

the *stage fright* and agonized sweatings of the unhappy grinds in their attempts to stammer out what had cost so many hours of study.

“Go sharpen your wits, you lunkhead!”

After classes, the students were at liberty for the rest of the day; there were no athenæums; conferences, lectures, debates and university extension courses to stimulate the minds of the ambitious, were unknown here. Until the next morning, university life was reduced to the extension of the café, the taverns, walks, billiards, cards and night serenades. One would think that the city had a great fear of knowledge. Quietude was its cult. It seemed as if its aim was that no one should do anything nor know anything.

But the time was imperceptibly passing for Gerardo. He had paired off with Barcala for studying and, as they were very bright and quick and there was but little work to be done, a couple of hours sufficed—the days they studied. Let us not calumniate our friends by supposing a devotion to study incompatible with their natures. There were times when they carried certain abstruse paragraphs pinned to more convenient places than minds; but, as for a purpose runs through the world the student macaronic aphorism of the *intellectus apretatus*, with this weak support, they did very well when called upon in class and passed for studious students. Thus, the first of May arrived.

Being able to accomplish so much with so little effort, were they not going to spend a good part of the two hours set aside for study in talking, building castles in the air through whose salóns of jasper, porphyry and alabaster defiled interminable rosy illusions?

It was during these agreeable moments that Casimiro used to read to his friend the smooth, flowing verses which his muse, at times tender and at times burlesque, dictated to him in class, distracting him from the horrors of civil law or the abomination of forensic proceedings.

The señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, gave up the idea of becoming a great scholar, and, although more secretly in order that his doings might not reach ears that would be shocked by them, entered into all the escapades and

became the ring-leader in most of the student deviltry. It was he who filched Don Bartolomé's meat pies ready to be baked in Quingallas's oven—together with Barcala and several other grave and respectable señores devotees of secret hot dinners; he who fastened long cords to the door knockers of the houses in the peaceful *calle de la Virgen de la Cerca* [Virgin of the Hedge Street], pulled by his friends hidden behind the empty bread baskets, driving the inhabitants of that quiet street simply wild; he who pretending to have been sent by the nuns of Belvís, got some fine hams from *Pepe Pequeno*; he who, with Madeira, climbed into the study window which a careless servant failed to close, of the Catholic College Boarding House and took all the note books, the tired students of the dormitory had left on their desks, and hung them from the arm of the angel crowning the fountain in the Platerías, with a large lettered sign:

“THIS IS ALL THEY ARE GOOD FOR! ANOTHER DAY WE WILL HANG THE AUTHORS OF THE NOTES.”

Afternoons, and sometimes between classes, Gerardo would take several turns through the *calle de la Senra* where he was almost sure to meet Señor Fernández Valiño accompanied by his inseparable friend and admirer, the hump-backed editor of *The Liberty*, Jesusito Mollido, “a crook in body and mind,” as Barcala said.

When Gerardo passed the Castro's, a curtain of the gallery would move or, once in a while, a tiny, white hand would wave to him. Occasionally, Carmiña appeared at the window and smiled at him when he tipped his hat.

Compostela did not seem so tiresome, gloomy and insupportable as formerly—not even when the rain falling implacably on the black stones obliged him to remain indoors. Nobody can harbor the blues in a young heart full of illusions.

Of all the amusements of Santiaguan life, not even excepting serenading, Gerardo liked best the Thursday and Sunday afternoon promenades in the Alameda, enlivened by the archæological, “brilliant” band of the Hospicio, which always rendered the same “select” program, never failing to include the quickstep, “Manolé” and “The Pre-

lude and third act of Lohengrin.” And one had to believe that it was that which was being played, because it said so on the program.

Gerardo with his boon companions, Armero, Madeira and Barcala went early; took a couple of turns through the wide central promenade, still deserted; flirted a bit with the little sewing girls of the left hand walk and, as soon as the people really began to arrive, took chairs in the *Hospicio*, so that they could get a good view of the “crush.” The “crush” filled about one third of the space at the most crowded moment.

The earliest promenaders were the dressmakers, seamstresses and other artisans whom custom confined to the left hand walk. The central or “*salón*” was reserved for the *señorío*¹ and no artisan would dare to walk there any more than the servants, bakers, shoemakers, etc., confined to the right walk, would dare to profane the left by stepping a foot into it; but they enjoyed the privilege of dancing all the afternoon.

The dressmakers and seamstresses of the left walk protested vehemently at the separation of classes, which did not permit them to mingle with the señoritas who monopolized the students—as if they were not as good looking and as well dressed as they.

And, indeed they were; with their pretty faces, expressive eyes, saucy mouths and, above all, for the unique grace with which the girls of this class in Santiago wore their long, ample velvet mantillas fastened under their chins and crossed on their breasts, reaching almost to their shoes, many of them were worthy to substitute for the queen of beauty seated upon her throne.

In the *salón*, the mothers, as soon as they arrived, took possession of the stone benches or the bronze seats in the *Hospicio* at two cents apiece, according to the category, the pocketbook or economical belief of each, while their daughters united in groups flanked by students, walked around and around the fountain, chatting and coquetting under their vigilant eyes.

The elderly men promenaded in small groups engaged

¹ Señorío, gentlemen and ladies of the highest society—formerly, nobility.

in grave or more or less witty conversation. Don Ventura Lozano y Portilla was always sure to be one of them.

Señorita Castro arrived about the middle of the afternoon, with her friends Moncha and Filo Lozano. Roquer and Barcala would bow to them ceremoniously, leave their seats and start to walk in the opposite direction, so that they would meet them and be able to casually join their group.

Time and time again, Gerardo tried to get a word with Carmen, but the little Galician always parried his attempts with feminine coquetry, remaining between her friends or, if caught outside, pretending to be greatly interested in a conversation with the young man opposite.

Occasionally Gerardo would get a chance to whisper into her ear: "Whatever you do, I am bound to win you," or "Hide it, hide it all you like, but it does not do any good; I know you are just dying for this 'chromo.'" At other times, when desperate: "Carmen, I cannot stand it any longer; you are tormenting me beyond endurance."

She took no notice of anything he said and only when she saw him perfectly disconsolate would she vouchsafe him one of those very tender looks so full of meaning.

And so the months passed and it was the first of May, the month of flowers and worried students spending their nights in cramming for the June examinations; frightful June with the terror of "exams" arrived all too soon, finding the students in a panic with assignments half learned and hunting for friends to say a good word for them, to mitigate the rigor of the professors. Many of the students losing confidence in themselves, pinned their faith to the saints of heaven and could be found in obscure corners of any of the churches secretly praying to the whole celestial court for a miracle from heaven.

The girls, too, *novias* of the distressed college boys, prayed incessantly in those days. The blessed mouths, thrice blest for their beauty, purity and goodness—how they encouraged the downcast ones!

"Don't worry, dear, I have made a *novena* to Santa Rita, asking her to save you from failing and am beginning another to San Antonio to deliver you from those terrible professors; and besides, I have gotten my uncle who knows

how good you are, to promise that he will speak to the ferocious Don Adolfo. I told him, that you were a cousin of a friend of mine and he laughed. I have made a vow to the Apostle, that, if you pass all your examinations, I will fast three days before Easter, next Lent. Three days on bread and water. . . .! For you to go away and forget all about your girl in Santiago when you have finished your college course. . . .!"

The boys had never been so serious; walking up and down the cloister, each awaiting his hour with a careworn expression, one would hardly recognize the fun-loving youths. By a tacit agreement established several years previous, no one went in to witness the oral examinations. Each one was left to settle his own account with the professors. When a victim came out suffocated, but smiling with a feeling of satisfaction, like one awakening from a nightmare, they all jumped to meet him.

"What subjects did they hit upon?"

"Did they ask many questions?"

"Were they hard?"

"Did they make you go through all that stuff?"

"What did they say?"

Later, while the faculty was deliberating, the excitement among the students reached its highest pitch.

"I hope they take long enough about it!"

"I don't like the smell of it."

"I'm in the soup."

"No, man, no! You'll come out all right."

At other moments, they became more cheerful and a ray of hope would penetrate the clouds of fear, only to fade and leave them still blacker as the conclave continued behind closed doors.

"I hope they won't make a clean sweep of us!"

"They are liable to. . . . They are mean enough for anything."

At last, the bell sounded. Rivas, the beadle, more impressed than ever with his own importance, walked slowly into the hall and deposited his eternal cigar stub on the window sill. The noisy students impatiently crowded up to the platform, but soon quieted down and separated to give passage to the grave, enigmatic tribunal. One could

now hear a pin drop as Rivas appeared with the roll of papers in his hand; he picked up his stub, took a couple of puffs and shut the doors.

"Good heavens! Did you ever see a man so calm?" The moment finally arrived when he began distributing the folded papers.

"Don So-and-So?"

"Come."

A student stepped forward took his paper and was quickly surrounded by his friends.

"Let's see. . . . Let me see!"

"Good! Hurrah for the faculty!"

In general, they were satisfied with their marks. The failures were few; two or three in a class—nothing. This year, only one in "The House of Troy" was *flunked*, poor *Pitouto*!

"It's a darn shame! And just think! He sat up two nights cramming! It's a crime!"

"It isn't fair! That old defrocked friar just had it in for me," grumbled Pitouto. "He asked me all kinds of questions about the Justinian Code, and stuff like that."

"And what did you say?"

"I said, a code was something to do with the telegraph, that . . ."

"You must have passed a grand examination. What else did you say?"

"I said . . . I said . . . How do I know what I said? Here's this Manolo Casás who never even bought a text book, and see how he came out with flying colors!"

"Yes, but he is brighter than you are, Pitouto, and, besides, has been putting in the licks these last few weeks."

"He hasn't anything on me for that. I've been at it for a month."

All our friends made a happy exit from their days of torment. Barcala had two *excellents* and a *good*; Augusto Armero, vice versa; Madeira received the first *excellent* of his career and was overjoyed. He took no more interest in anything, but just went around showing it to everybody who wished to see it and to those who did not wish to see it, too. Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, nearly burst with joy. He had two *goods* and one *fair* in his.

Samoeiro, Flama, Boullosa and all the other *Trojans*, except *Pitouta*, pulled through—and with very little effort.

There was just one more bridge to be crossed—mercantile law, under Don Servando. Usually, he was easy on them, very easy, but once in a while he went on a rampage and slaughtered right and left, leaving hardly a man standing. This had occurred only two or three times during all the years he had been connected with the University, but there was always the dread of such a catastrophe. Now, signs were ominous. The odd professor who ordinarily gave very little attention to what the examined were saying, but tried to confuse them with ambiguous questions, this time, sat like a statue. And that was not the worst of it; from time to time he appeared to be making notes of the things they said.

“What do you think he was writing?” the students asked of one another.

“Nothing good, you better believe.”

The fact was, as each student entered, he wrote something in his note book and then looking at him with a sarcastic expression said: “Talk.”

The poor fellows more or less embarrassed, would begin to reel off their words under the weight of that scrutinizing look and, all of a sudden, Don Servando would write down something and they would become still more confused, wondering what mistake they had made; the more uncomfortable his pupils seemed to be, the more he wrote, until their words became more and more incoherent and their tongues clove to the roofs of their mouths.

“Is that all you have to say?” queried the professor after a few seconds of silence, which felt to them like twenty-one years and a day. “Very well. You may go and send in another man.” And the last straw was to see Don Servando resume his scribbling after the dismissal.

“I can see my finish.”

“But what do you suppose he was writing?”

“My death sentence.”

The ordeal came to an end, as everything must; the doors closed and once more there was a consultation of the *wise men*.

"What notes did you make?" the secretary inquired as usual of the examining professor.

"Anything you like," replied the humorist.

"No, you are the one to have your say in this course."

"Well, *excellent* to all. Ha, ha!"

"Caramba, Don Servando!"

"Failure, if you like; it is all the same to me. Ha, ha!"

"Don Servando, please!"

"They are all alike. . . . There is not an iota's difference. Look!"—showing his accursed paper full of donkeys' heads with colossal ears—"That is what I was doing while they were imparting their knowledge of commercial law. Each time they brayed, I enlarged these appendages. . . . See! They are all alike, so . . ."

"So we may pass them all?"

"Good."

"One moment!" interrupted the other judge, Don Claudio Redoles: "With permission of my colleague, I would like to call your attention to the brilliant examination of Señor Cunca y Velarde, Don Esteban."

"Ah, yes. Cunca y Velarde, the parrot, who knew the whole text book word for word. You are right. Put failure in big letters for that blockhead."

"Failure?" spurted the indignant Don Claudio: "For a man who has had *excellents* all through his college course and knows his books by heart?"

"That is the reason. If I have anything to say about it, he will not pass. *Excellent* to a parrot. Damn the chattering bird! . . . You think that you can conscientiously pass that storehouse of words? . . . Failure, failure, I say."

And so they wrangled. It was always the same old story every year. There existed between them one of those petty rivalries so common in small universities. Don Servando held Don Claudio in contempt and often referred to him in class as "that trunk full of judicial rubbish." Don Claudio paid him back in his own coin by treating him with the greatest respect and indulgence "on account of his eccentricities."

Fortunately, the secretary, a phlegmatic man accustomed to these discussions, let them quarrel, while he was making

out the papers with the marks. When he handed them to the professors to sign:

“What classification did you make of Señor Cunca?” they asked.

“Seeing that you were each at extremes and could not agree, I split the difference and put *fair*. . . . Come, sign. It is getting late.” And without waiting for a reply, rang the bell for the beadle who came at once.

With what anxiety the students were waiting without! How many times they had pressed their ears against the massive wooden doors to try to catch some word which might give them an inkling of the decision! Each held his breath as he unfolded his paper and then. . . . What a shout broke the silence! In vain, the beadle tried to quiet them.

“Order, señores! There never was such an uproar in the building! Order!”

“Caramba, Rivas! After all we have gone through this afternoon!”

Casimiro and Gerardo made a bee line for the Alameda where they hoped, it being Thursday afternoon, to find Moncha and Carmiña promenading around the fountain to the music of the “brilliant” band.

“Oh, it is useless to run. See, everybody is coming away. Those old dubs kept us there all the afternoon just for spite,” grumbled Gerardo.

“No, this is about the time for Lohengrin,” encouragingly insisted the poet.

But he was mistaken; Manolé, the boisterous, Lohengrin, the mystic, and all the others had had their turn. Benito, the policeman, alone, remained. In the Rúa, the way taken by most of the people returning from the concert, neither, did they find those whom they sought. They separated.

Barcala went over to the *calle del Franco* where, in front of Don Ventura’s, he was seized with a violent fit of coughing till one of the balcony windows was cautiously opened and a mocking feminine voice condoled with him.

“Poor little one, what a terrible cold you have! You ought to go to bed and take a sweat. . . .” Suddenly

changing her tone: "How did you come out in the examination, Casimiriño?"

"Passed, Monchiña!"

"Ah, all on account of the Pater Nosters I said to San Antonio; I have spent all the afternoon praying till my knees are raw."

"The Dickens you have! For whom have you been saying them?"

"For whom should I say them?"

"You ought to be saying them for yourself, child, who needs to have petitions in heaven; but I . . . ?"

"Yes, I know; you are a little saint."

"From heaven."

"Saint Casimiro, the deaf, who never hears any petitions."

"Everything. As soon as they ask me. Saint Peter is always saying to me: 'Casimiriño, you will ruin yourself.' I tell him that is natural for a gentleman."

"Ah, then, because you have given everything, you have nothing left for me."

"But do you pray to me?"

"And why don't I, boy?"

"But it never reaches me. I have given orders to Saint Tobias who has charge of the celestial mail, that if ever a message comes for me from the little saint in the *calle del Franco* to deliver it at once, but he never brings me any. The post is running very badly for you. Do you remember to put on the stamps?"

And then there began such a downpour of tendernesses and sweetnesses that the very stones of the street were softened.

Meanwhile, Gerardo went to walk in the *calle de la Senra* and was also attacked with a bad cough which, no doubt, he caught from Barcala. But nobody came to take pity on him, so he broke camp and went to the Casino where he wrote a letter to Señorita Castro.

It was brief: "Several months ago, you asked me for a proof of the truth of my words. Here it is. What have you to say to me now?" He inclosed his reports and sealed the envelope with emotion. Then he went out to

mail it. He also telegraphed to his father who had been for the past two months in Madrid: "Exams over; two goods, two fairs. Love."

After supper, he took Barcala for a walk in the Senra.

"Do you know what Moncha told me? She said that Don Laureano had made up with his brother-in-law, Don Angelito. So you see, *Maragota* has the inside track now."

"Bah! He's a worthy enemy!" said Gerardo contemptuously, but then, after a moment's hesitation: "Do you think that *Maragota* is to be feared?"

"As it is a question of such a discreet woman of good taste as Carmen, I think you need not worry."

Consumed with impatience, Gerardo waited all the next day for the reply which did not come. Of course, there really was not time—but what he did get was a telegram from his father: "Was expecting this success. Much pleased. Love. Congratulations. Impatiently awaiting you."

On the strength of this, he wrote again to Señorita Castro and inclosed the telegram, urging the necessity of a prompt reply to his note of the night before. "You can see that my father wishes me to come at once, but I cannot go without the ardently desired 'yes.' I think that I have well earned it and am impatiently waiting for my reward." That and much more adorned with his finest phrases and ended by again begging her to reply as soon as possible.

She granted his request; at least, he promptly received a letter which he read and reread again and again. What did it mean?

It was short, in courteous, discreet and well considered words, thanking the student for his, but deferring the answer to his suit. She did not doubt his present sentiments, but . . . "Are you sure that they may not change? As you are going to Madrid tomorrow, I think we would better leave things as they are till you return to Santiago . . . if you do return." She ended by wishing him a pleasant trip and a very enjoyable summer, signing simply: "C."

Very nervous and in a devilish temper, he was going to write again, when it occurred to him that he ought to make

some farewell calls that very afternoon and, naturally, he owed one to the Castros; and would he probably not find occasion to say a word to Carmiña alone? In any case, he would carry a letter begging a few minutes' conversation that evening from the balcony. . . .

And so we find him between five and six in the afternoon lifting the knocker on Señor Castro's door. Presently, his heart palpitating and a slight catch in his breath—according to regulation in such cases—he was ushered by a neat little maid into the drawing-room which was at the same time congenial and severe, containing a combination of comfortable modern and antique furniture proclaiming the nobility of the family ancestry, presided over by a large painting of the Virgin of Carmen, to the right of which hung the portrait of a señora bearing an extraordinary resemblance to Carmen; to the left, was a copy in oil of a photograph standing among others on the piano, of Don Carlos and Doña Margarita, set in a rich frame having the royal coat of arms above and the inscription beneath: "To our loyal subjects and dear friends, Ramona and Laureano Castro. Margarita Carlos."

On the opposite wall was a full length portrait of a bearded monk surrounded by angels, an antique painting showing the marks of time; below, Gerardo read: "The true likeness of the Venerable Father Fray Tomás of Castro, Prior of the Monastery of Our Lady of Morujo for thirty consecutive years during which time the said monastery was erected from the first to the last stone and, at the same time, the income of the Order was greatly increased. He was twice *Definer* of the Province of Santiago and Visiter of the Monasteries of the Queen of Galicia. He was born into the most noble family of Outeiro. Died in Our Lord at the age of eighty-five years, July 4, 1612."

Near by, stood a glass cabinet on the top shelf of which were arranged Don Laureano's decorations for bravery and loyalty in the service of the king; also, his sword and cap with the letters CVII embroidered in gold. On another shelf, were some miniature carvings and on a third a small but choice collection of fans which gave a cheerful note.

"To what am I indebted for the pleasure of this call?"

asked Señor Castro entering the drawing-room and cordially shaking hands with his visitor.

"I leave tomorrow for Madrid and have come to say good bye."

"I am sorry to hear it. Carmiña will be in directly. Are you glad to go?"

"That depends on what you mean. Naturally, I shall be pleased to see my father, but I am sorry to leave this place which has become very dear to me, although on my arrival, it seemed abominably sad and gloomy. I was used to the sunshine and cheerfulness of Madrid and it took me some time to appreciate the strange beauty of Santiago—especially its rain and black stones. But, I have found the people most congenial and hospitable and have made many friendships which, I am sure, will prove life long."

"So, you see," commented Don Laureano, to whom praise of Santiago or Galicia was always pleasant; "you owe a debt of gratitude to your father for having sent you here."

Gerardo could not answer. He was struck dumb by the entrance of Carmiña dressed in a simple, white percale with red polka dots, belted in at the waist with a piece of black velvet and black velvet ribbons tied around her neck and wrists; a single red rose was adorning her hair. By all the saints! She was pretty, prettier than Gerardo had ever pictured her. But what quality did this woman, this witch, this goddess possess, that she grew more beautiful every day?

Feeling a little confused without really knowing why, she extended her hand to Gerardo who was devouring her with his eyes, and said:

"So you are off for Madrid?"

"Yes, señorita, and you . . .?"

Fortunately, Don Laureano took up the conversation, relieving the embarrassment, talking of the history of Santiago and the peculiarities of the town. Gerardo formulated his impressions of those eight unforgettable months—how desperate he felt on his arrival; the hatred and repulsion with which the innocent Compostela inspired him during those first days; his going to "The House of Troy,"

giving a graphic description of his companions there; he related some of their innocent pranks and his reconciliation to life in Santiago. . . . Turning to Carmiña and gracefully bowing he said:

"This fairy is really responsible for that miracle. In one of those moments which decides the fortunes and sentiments of a person, Carmen made me realize the beauty, the sweetness, the poetry and the love of Galicia by singing some Galician songs which made a deep and everlasting impression. . . . Perhaps you may have forgotten. . . ."

"No, I remember," she responded blushing.

This led Don Laureano to expatiate on his favorite theme, Galicia, which turned into tales of his campaigning in the north, that brought in the King and the Queen and their personal friendship.

When physicians ordered Don Laureano to take his wife away from Venecia on account of her health and bring her to Galicia to see what the balmy air of the country would do for his jewel, the Queen wept at their parting and taking the brooch she was wearing from her corsage, pinned it onto her friend. Since that time, they had never failed to receive cards or letters at Easter and on the days of San Ramón and San Laureano,¹ bearing some affectionate message from the King and Queen: "The Queen embraces you affectionately." "We wish you many happy returns of the day. Los Reyes² . . ."

"I am going to show you some." Don Laureano got up and went over to a beautifully carved desk on the other side of the room.

Gerardo improved the occasion to take the letter from his pocket and give it to Carmiña, saying in a low tone: "You are very cruel! . . . Carmen, do not let me go away without giving me some hope and comfort."

Carmen, almost suffocated, hardly had time to hide the letter when her father came back with his souvenirs.

Gerardo stayed for sometime longer and then hated to tear himself away, but, finally, rose to say good bye.

"Until October, Señor Roquer?" said Don Laureano.

¹ Spaniards celebrate the Saint's day for whom they are named, instead of their own birthday.

² Los Reyes, a title including both king and queen.

“Yes, señor. Adiós, Carmen. What shall I bring you from Madrid?”

“Nothing, thank you. I hope, you may have a very pleasant summer.” There was a suspicion of a quaver in her voice and Gerardo felt her hand tremble as he took it in his; and a close observer could also have detected a lack of firmness in the lover’s commonplace:

“Until my return! Until my return!”

That night, Gerardo ate but little and that hurriedly, and started immediately after supper for the *calle de la Senra*, feeling confident that Carmiña would grant him the few minutes conversation from her balcony for which he pleaded in the letter; nor was he disappointed. The windows of the principal floor were open and were not far enough above the street to prevent people from getting a good view of Señorita Castro seated at the piano; not playing, but, evidently, in a pensive mood. The student’s impulse was to scale the balcony at a leap, which would not have been a very difficult task; however, he stood spell-bound, enraptured by the picture. All at once, the agile fingers of the young girl lightly ran some arpeggios in a minor key and began to sing in her rich contralto voice the pathetic song:

“Sitting one night in a garden . . .”

Gerardo trembled as if shaken by an electric current and a big lump came up into his throat, so that he could not speak; at last, he managed to sigh rather than call the beloved name:

“Carmen! . . . Carmiña. . . .”

As she, absorbed in her music, did not hear, he ran by leaps and bounds to the flower beds of the Alameda and began plucking flowers here and there and everywhere—pinks, roses, fuchsias, heliotrope—without heeding the notices nor even Benitiño, the model park policeman, who was hurrying in his direction:

“Hay there! What the devil you doing? Git out o’ here! You’ll ruin the garden! I’ll run you in. T’hell

with these stoo-dents al'ays after flowers for their best gals."

Little cared he in his reckless mood, but, as his hands were full, he took to his heels and reaching the house gave a mighty throw which landed the bouquet in a shower even to the very center of the drawing-room, raining his greeting upon the melancholy singer and startling her so, that she jumped up with a little cry. A voice from the street soon calmed her:

"Carmiña! It is I."

"You? What a crazy thing! I might have known it. . . . But you gave me such a fright. Go away!" . . . she said, putting out the lights and coming to the balcony.

"No, Carmiña; I shall not go till you give me a definite answer. Yes or no? Anything is better than this uncertainty. You do not know what you are making me suffer. Sometimes, I think you return my love and I am happy; at others, I feel that you are amusing yourself with me. . . . Have some pity, Carmiña! . . . I have read your letter a hundred times; what do you mean by it? Why do you still put me off? Haven't I proved my love for you by doing what you asked? It is not fair."

"Yes; be reasonable and listen: if you were to continue to live here, it is possible that you might be true to the passion which you paint in such glowing colors, but you are going to Madrid; you will renew old acquaintances; you are returning to your former life, very different from our quiet manner of living here. Other women much prettier, more elegant, more gracious than we are—we simple country señoritas—will attract your attention and, after you have been *at the court* a couple of days, you will forget all about us."

"No, no, a thousand times no! Whether in Madrid or Peking, nothing can ever make me forget you and when I come back . . ."

"And if you *do* forget? And if you do *not* come back?"

"For the love of God, Carmen! You doubt everything I say. You have no confidence in me at all. Nothing that I say or do makes any impression on you. Do concede something to faith in me as a gentleman of good

breeding. . . . Let us not waste any more time. I beg of you, give me your answer. I wish to know my fate before leaving tomorrow, happy or wretched. Yes or no? Answer me, for God's sake!"

"When you come back."

"What do you mean by that?"

"That I hope . . ."

"That you hope what? . . . Then I may believe . . . I ought to believe . . ."

"Consult your own heart."

"Oh, Carmiña, we are just losing time. Say more; tell me the truth, I implore you."

"What more can I say than *I hope?* . . ."

There was a pause during which each was too deeply moved to speak.

She broke the silence:

"Go, Gerardo. Papa is liable to come back from the Casino at any moment. Go."

"Like this? Without any other parting word?"

"Gerardo! . . . Do not ask me for more! What more have I to say to you?" she pleaded in a quavering voice: "I wish you all the happiness in the world!"

"Happiness! You know what will make me happy and since you hold the gift of happiness in your hand, if you were sincere in your wish, you would give it to me. Make me happy, Carmiña!"

"Come back, Gerardo."

"Do you want me to come back? Really hope that I will? Do you ask me to come back?"

". . . Come back, Gerardo."

"I will, I will! I will come back!"

"Adiós, adiós, Gerardo! Go, go now! Papa is coming. Adiós! . . . Until you come back!"

"Yes, until I come back. I shall leave my heart here with you and shall come back to ask for yours. Adiós!"

He painfully tore himself away, walking very slowly with his face turned toward her. Carmiña toyed a moment with the rose on her bosom, took it off, smelt of it—did she kiss it?—and let it fall, closing the casement as she stepped back, but not so tightly, that she could not see Gerardo return, pick up the flower and kiss it passionately.

XI

Would you believe it? He was sorry to leave Santiago. He, whom you have seen so many times stricken with homesickness, felt a certain sadness as "The Carrilana" started out carrying him bound for Madrid.

It was a real grief to say good bye to his friends, those loyal comrades who had taught him the meaning of true friendship—friendship born in the heart, free from selfishness—that which does not grow in proportion to its gain, that which endures forever pure and steadfast.

Before getting into the coach, he took one last turn through the *calle de la Senra* on pretext of buying cigarettes in Doña Socorrita's tobacco shop for himself and Madeira who was to be his companion as far as La Coruña.

Everything was closed at Don Laureano's. Gerardo would have liked to see a little white hand wave to him from between the curtains, but his wish was not gratified.

At the last moment, Gerardo and Barcala closed in a strong embrace:

"Let us always be friends, Casimiro!"

"Always, my boy! Upon my word, I'm sorry to see you go. Be sure to write. Until October; eh?"

"And, if I can, before. Adiós, Augustiño!" He got out for another embrace. "You know. . . ."

"Yes, I know. Don't worry! I will write you everything that happens," answered the useful fellow, winking knowingly.

"Yes, don't you skip the slightest thing. . . . Marcelino, big Marcelino, adiós. Why Quiroguiño! I didn't say good bye to you! . . . Manolito, Casás, Boullosa! Write to me!"

"Remember me to the fair ones!"

"Take a dance for me in the Bombilla!"

"Adiós, Madeira! *Bon Voyage!*"

“Adiós, you rascal!” yelled the happy Madeira sticking his head out of the window.

“Madeiriña! When did you climb onto the earth?”

“Ay, Pepiño, adiós!
Ay, Pepiño, adiós!
Ay, Pepiño, por Diós
Don't go away! . . .”

“You write me all the news in Madrid!” called Augusto, as the diligence pulled out.

* * * * *

What could he find to write? After two days in Madrid, he had to confess that the eight months spent in that gloomy city of black stone had greatly modified his ideas and sentiments and made him contrast the value of persons and things, estimating them very differently from formerly. As soon as his father set him at liberty after talking over all that had happened during their long separation, he hurried to greet his old friends and received his first shock; they did not welcome him with the enthusiasm which he had expected. He discovered that their friendship had not been very substantial. Neither did he find them as interesting as he had thought; they were well informed about bulls and dancers and other such classics, but, apparently, they did not know that they were living in an age of great inventions, literature and events which were making important history. They were full of the latest jokes, very good company for a game or two or many games, but were incapable of any real friendship; they would never sacrifice themselves for a comrade like the fellows in Santiago. They even made fun of the notes which it had cost him so much to obtain. We should like to see those they would have taken in his place.

He visited the quarters of the actresses, his friends, where also he was expecting to be received with great glee, and met with indifference. Some had forgotten him, others had not remarked his absence; some had forgotten his name, others made fun of him and Galicia and—what angered him more than all the rest—of the Galician girls.

And were these the people for whom he had sighed so many desperate days in Santiago?

Notwithstanding the disappointment in his former companions, he managed to amuse himself, taking advantage of the liberal allowance, his father gave him. He cheered at the bull fights; at an unfortunate *first night* at the Prince Alfonso, he called out two or three jokes which were much more successful than those on the stage; took supper with a party—male and female—in the Bombilla. . . . But, in spite of all, our friend said to himself that he was not having such a good time as he had had in Santiago when he went out to loiter about with the *Trojans* and, maybe, end up by a fight with the night watchman.

Perhaps, in writing to Gerardo, Augusto with his effervescent spirit, was prone to exaggerate a little, and more than a little did the absent lover mentally add to the exaggeration in embellishing the picture in the midst of which lived the beloved being. The place where *she* dwells is always the most beautiful spot on earth or the inhabited planets; that portion of the sky which covers it is always the bluest and harbors the brightest stars; its inhabitants are the most charming and cordial, the most beneficent and just; the food more delicate and delicious than elsewhere, because the lover is nourished principally on sweet looks and tender sighs; even those racks which in boarding houses are designated by the fantastic name of beds, may become prodigies of comfort and cleanliness.

Could our twenty-year-old hero deviate from the law which regulates the mechanism of the lover's heart and his state of mind?

Yes, Gerardo eagerly looked for the letters of his friends from that heaven on earth, particularly Augusto's which were ingenuous, incoherent epistles full of nothingnesses, but of intense interest to the exile: "The persons of our predilection remain without change in their important health." . . . "The Ball of the Apostle was certainly awfully jolly, but there was no one there of interest to you. You can see that they are nursing your absence." . . .

One night at dinner, Don Juan notified his son, that, as he had finished his business in Madrid, he should be obliged to return to Paris within a few days.

“What are you going to do?” he inquired rather anxiously.

That very morning, Gerardo had received a letter from Augusto, which was like food to the hungry:

“. . . I have just arrived in La Coruña and expect to spend the month of August in this smiling city, the most beautiful place on earth—after Madrid, of course. Who, do you suppose, was in the berlin? No less a personage than my respectable friend and neighbor, Don Laureano Castro and his most beautiful, gentile and agreeable daughter. She’s sure some girl, boy! She’s a peach! A diamond of the first water! If you could have seen her, you would be ten times more in love than you are now. We conversed all the way. For a long time, we didn’t mention you, but talked all around you, because Don Laureano was right there, but, after a while, he went to sleep and we could speak freely. I told Carmen, that you were bored to death in Madrid; she pretended not to believe it, but it was plain as the nose on your face, that she was tickled to death. On account of the bad habit I have of going about with my pockets full of papers, I happened to have your last two letters handy. You can’t imagine what a good turn they did you. First, I showed her the one in which you speak of being restless as if you missed someone and then I let her read that paragraph you wrote about her in such ardent terms. She tried to make out that she was not particularly interested when I pointed to it, but when I pretended that I was going to put it back into my pocket, she stretched out her hand for it and simply devoured it; not only that paragraph, but the whole epistle, my boy. And she did the same with another that I found among my papers, taking it out of my hand before I had a chance to offer it to her. Then she read them all over again. So you see!

“When she had finished reading, she remained very quiet and thoughtful for a long time. Then she said that you were very impressionable and impulsive, very vehement in all your passions and that fires which burn so fiercely soon burn themselves out. I took it for granted that she was asking my opinion and assured her that it would not be so in your case. Then she became very

serious again and tried to feign indifference, but could not control her interest and kept asking me question after question about you, sometimes in the Galician fashion by making a statement and then again by direct question. I cannot go into all the details; enough to say, I defended your case like a good lawyer.

"One of the things she was most anxious to find out was whether the affair with the actress, which caused your exile to Santiago, was really over or if you had renewed your relations with her after getting back to Madrid. I allayed her fears.

"That night, I met her in the Relleno which was just full of pretty girls. Oh, the girls of La Coruña, Gerardiño . . .! My, but they are corkers! I walked with her a little while; she was with some friends. When I was leaving, I said: 'I am going to write to him tomorrow.'

" 'Do not tell him anything we have said,' she warned me.

"You can see how well I have obeyed.

"Today, they have gone to their country home, Pazo, in the Mariñas, three or four hours from here. . . ."

She was interested in him! She loved him! Here was the proof. Every nerve tingled. He could not wait. He must hear the confession from her own lips. This was the reason that when Don Juan anxiously questioned him about his plans, he replied promptly:

"If you have no objection, I will return to Galicia."

That is why—after having told his father, that of which he had already been informed by the "detailed and punctual relation of the life and actions of your señor son in this noble and hospitable city of Santiago," which, opportunely, had remitted to him his loyal friend and humble servant, Don Ventura Lozano y Portilla, Ex-Judge of Órdenes—the Señor Roquer y Paz, Don Gerardo, found himself one beautiful morning in early August, riding on a vigorous Galician mount which he had acquired of a horsejockey in La Coruña, along the fascinating byways of the Mariñas in search of the "Pazo"¹ of happiness, the exact name and location of which he did not know, but, doubted not, he should soon learn. Hunting for it in this

¹ Pazo, a Galician contraction of plazo, place.

haphazard way was a stimulating and pleasant sensation to the Madrileño and, although he was anxious to catch sight of its walls, he was traveling leisurely, thoroughly enjoying the journey while he held in suspense the pleasure of the supreme moment of which he was so sure.

Without other directions than the vague information obtained from Augusto, that the Pazo was situated somewhere near the mouth of the Sada and the contradictory answers of the peasants whom he questioned, Gerardo was continuing his peregrinations begun the day before, admiring the scenery in a state of sublime contentment.

He had eaten some sardines with *cachelos* in Montrove; lunched almost well in the civilization of San Pedro; drunk a glass of their delicious light wine in Rivero with which they cheered travelers at the Joaquin Tavern in Armuño; eaten supper in Lubre and spent the night at Sada, the pleasant village which rests its head on the soft cushions of the pretty valley of the same name and permits the tranquil waters of the incomparable delta to kiss its feet.

Receiving one delightful impression after another, our friend was wending his way, invited to continue his admiration by the thousand beauties which revealed themselves in whichever direction he turned his eyes. Now it was the pellucidness of the emerald sea dotted here and there with the whiteness of a sail or specks of foam on the crest of a wave brought into being by a light breeze; then, the shady undulated path losing itself in a tunnel of verdure; again, the opulence of some grand old chestnuts whose leaves trembled with emotion as they received the caresses of an amorous, restless zephyr; perhaps, the softness of a green meadow or the murmur of a brook; the rose hedges enclosing the gardens; the sudden appearance of a hamlet hiding among the laurels; feminine and childish voices intoning simple melodies of a vague and tender melancholy; the distant creaking carts, raising above the silence of the fields their prolonged song of work, peace and contentment; the blue sky, the slender pines, the provident fruit trees; the dominating ruins of the old fortifications scaled by clumps of trees; the humble, miniature churches with their poetic cemeteries,

“Always in peace”;

the hymn to the merciful God, creator of all this beauty, which the birds were warbling at this hour, modulating that which nature was pouring forth by her august silence and grandeur of beauty. . . . All this and more which the human tongue in its poverty is inadequate to depict and can only be expressed through the song of birds, the whisper of grain fields, the rustle of leaves, the complaint of the pines, the babble of brooks, the perfume of jasmine and roses, the lap of waves on the sands of the beach, the laugh of children and women, the bells of the village churches—in fact, Galicia which is all beauty—and peace—and love.

How could one pass insensibly between this poetry of earth and heaven without declaring one's self,

“The devoted slave of so much beauty”?

The beauty, the tranquillity, the affability of that singular nature filled the soul of the student with cheerfulness and optimism. . . . The combination of salt air and aroma of fields was very stimulating and was creating in the youth a rapacious appetite—it was twenty robust years on horseback at noon, dear reader!—and he put spurs to his steed to arrive—anywhere, no matter where.

And, as in Galicia one must quickly find one's self somewhere, it was not long before he found himself on a highway and soon came to the symbolic branch of laurel over a doorway. He dismounted, tied his horse to one of the large iron rings cemented into the front of the building for that purpose, and entered the tavern.

“Can you give me something to eat?”

“Prob'ly, señor,” answered the tavernkeeper; and he called to his wife, who came out of an inner room.

She informed him that they had no delicacies, but, if he would be satisfied with fresh cheese which that very day had been brought from Betanzos, sausages, fresh sardines from the Sada and ham, they could accommodate him.

"That suits me to a T! Give me some ham and some cheese and a slice of sausage, and bring them at once. But serve my luncheon out of doors."

"So yuh'r' hungry; be yuh?"

"Famished."

"Hev' yuh ben ridin' since early this mornin'?"

"See here, my good woman, I am in no mood for conversation; you let up with your questions and bring me some luncheon, flying."

"Yes, yes, señor. It's plain tu be seen yuh'r' young an' hot blooded. How much ham shall I cut yuh?"

"Woman, it doesn't matter, only cut it."

"Ay, I just ast yuh, 'cause yuh might want more an' yuh might want less."

"More, more. Didn't I tell you I was hungry?"

"Then yuh hev' walked a long way?" insisted the curious woman.

"'Twas the hoss 'at walked," corrected a neighbor gossip who had already spent a half hour buying a jug of oil.

While she was serving his luncheon, Gerardo reversed the situation and questioned the tavernkeeper's wife about the things which interested him.

"Do you know of a señor from Santiago, who lives somewhere in this vicinity, called Don Laureano Castro? He has a *pazo* by the mouth of the river."

"Know him? Course I do. Why shouldn't I? Don Laureano an' the Señorita Carmen. The finest señores in the land; yuh c'n never find their like. She's so pretty an' so good t' the poor. . . . Ay, yuh c'n ask anybody 'bout here an' they know um. They live jes' over there in the Outeiro; the name o' their house is the Pazo de Castro."

Gerardo let the fork with which he was carrying a piece of ham to his mouth fall in front of him. All of a sudden, he lost that ravenous appetite with which he had begun to devour his luncheon.

"The Pazo de Castro is near here?"

"Yes, señor; very near. Jes, a bit uv a walk."

Gerardo jumped up and started towards the path.

“But ar’n’tche going to finish yuh lunch? An’ you so hungry!”

“No, I have eaten enough.”

But then it occurred to him, that it was not the proper hour to make calls. He looked at his watch; it was half after one. Probably, they would be eating at the Pazo. Yes, he must wait till later—half after five or six, which was the hour according to etiquette for such a call as he wished to make. He resolved to be patient and, convinced of the success of his journey, began to think of accommodations.

“Is there any decent, clean house near here where I could get lodgings for a few days?”

“Want a room?”

“Yes, and board too.”

“Fur yuhself an’ hoss; no?”

“Of course.”

“Goin’ t’ stay long?”

“I don’t know. A month; perhaps more . . . perhaps less.”

“An’ whatche want t’ eat?”

“Woman, whatever there is.”

“An’ whatche goin’ t’ pay?”

“How do I know?”

“Two meals; no?”

“And breakfast.”

“An’ th’ room an’ hoss?”

“Yes, yes; all that.” He was tired of the long interrogation. “Do you know of any place?”

“Hay, José!” yelled the tavernkeeper’s wife at the top of her lungs: “José, come down here!” and turning again to the young man, she asked him suspiciously: “Yuh hev’n’t come here fur an’tin’ bad hev’ yuh?”

From the floor above where he had been working, the tavernkeeper, a chubby little man with crafty expression and artful manner, came down in answer to his wife’s call.

The woman explained the situation to him.

“Whatche think?”

“Ay, that—there yuh are, begging yuh pardon. There’s

a room, a *currencho* in the room, excuse the word; ther's place fur the hoss. Dinner—if yuh hev' money yuh c'n buy whatche want an' we don't lack fur han's tuh cook it; thank's be tuh God! I'm glad 'nough tuh make a dollar, excuse the word. . . . We hev' ev'ry thing if yuh want tuh pay for't."

"How much do you ask?" inquired Gerardo.

The tavernkeeper consulting his wife: "What'd we better say?"

"The señor will pay an'thin' yuh ask, in peace."

Speaking to Gerardo: "Well, yuh see. . . . In giv'in' all this. . . ."

And after beating around the bush and around the bush according to the inevitable fashion of the Galician peasant who is always so afraid he will lose something or not gain enough, Gerardo succeeded in making an agreement with the tavernkeeper and his wife. A Homeric combat. They charged more than they ought; but, when he saw the large sitting room on the second floor, with connecting bed room, both well furnished, and, above all, when, on looking out of one of the windows, they pointed to a group of buildings on top of the hill and said: "That is the Outeiro," he was quite willing to pay the price.

José started off to Sada with a cart to get his new guest's baggage which Augusto was going to forward by the diligence and Gerardo thought, the best way to kill time until five thirty—the eternity of nearly four hours—was to take a siesta, so, after looking out of the window for some time with the vague hope of seeing a certain person rise up in one of the columns of smoke curling from the chimneys of the houses half hidden among the trees, flying to welcome him, he lay down on the bed.

"Little does she imagine that I am so near," he sighed.

He was thinking how surprised Carmen would be when she saw him, about what she would say, what he should say and what she would reply and, then, what he ought to say next. . . . The bed was hard and narrow, but he thought it the softest and most comfortable ever enjoyed by any prince in a fairy tale. His impatience would not let him go to sleep. He got up and looked out of the window for a long time. He went down stairs and sat

outside the door. He tried to read an old number of "The Voice of Galicia," which Tona, the tavernkeeper's wife had handed him. He went to inspect his horse. He went back up stairs to his rooms. Came down again. With all these comings and goings it got to be twenty-seven minutes before three. He thought to himself: "Time surely does pass slowly in the Mariñas!" and from this, he deducted that he might present himself at the Pazo at five instead of half after. At twenty-six minutes before three, he felt that it would be nothing out of the way to get there by half after four, for, in the country, they did not enforce the rules of etiquette so strictly as in the city. The next minute—the next century—he set four as the time to make his call; from which he immediately cut off fifteen and, after further consideration, he was sure that no one could take exception to his actions if he were to call, so far out in the country, at half after three. . . . At exactly quarter before, after having brushed himself for the twentieth time and looked into the mirror for the hundredth, he started at a good pace—to save time—up the path pointed out to him by Tona, which, she told him, was a short cut leading directly to the Outeiro.

It seemed a long way to the impatient youth ignorant of the Galician idea of distances; but every path has an end and this one ended in a little square in front of a large, wrought iron gate with a stone bench on either side backed up against the wall, between the bars of which, a curious tree protruded its branches laden with fruit; over the wall were climbing jasmines, honeysuckles and grape vines.

A stone cross between mitres of masonry, crowned the portal. Gerardo hesitated a moment before striking the gate with the great iron knocker and decided to question a woman taking care of two cows grazing by the roadside:

"My good woman, is this the Pazo of Castro?"

"Yes, señor," replied the cowherd.

"Do you happen to know whether the señores are at home?"

"Prob'bly they are; I ha'n't seen um go out."

Gerardo lifted the knocker, but the peasant called to him:

"Don' knock, señor. Open the gate an' walk right in. In this 'ere house, God bless it, yuh c'n walk in wi' out knockin'."

Gerardo lifted the latch or rather, bar, pushed open the huge gate and found himself in a spacious courtyard of one of those old, noble, Galician estates which used to serve as fortress and palace during the feudal centuries, every stone of which was a page of history. To the left, connected with the Pazo by an arcade with two windows, was a small chapel displaying over the entrance and below the spire, a coat of arms; to the right, a wall with a trellis running parallel to it, offering a delightfully shady walk, and, occupying all the background, a great stone house of two stories. A long stone balcony supported by typical arches extended the whole length of the second floor to the entrance, up to which led a flight of stone steps. The Castro coat of arms was carved over the door. The merlons of the roof and the very big, wide stone chimney were reminiscences of military Pazo.

But Gerardo saw nothing of this—not the palace nor the trellis nor the chapel nor the courtyard—he had eyes only for the white figure of a woman, her pretty face shaded from the sun by a red silk handkerchief tied under her chin, throwing handfuls of corn which she was taking from a basket, as she came down the steps, to a flock of hens and pigeons in the courtyard, calling affectionately to them in her gentle, clear voice, which, to the lover, was a heavenly song:

"C h i c k, chick, chick, chick, chick, chick . . .! H e r e, chick, chick, chick, chick, chick . . .!"

It was she! She; God be praised!!

His heart began to beat violently. God knows the millions of calories which perished in the catastrophe.

Recovered from his moment of excitement, hat in hand, the youth started across the courtyard with a quick, decided step. Addressing the maiden who looked at him with astonishment and joy which she could not repress, in a half serious, half comic manner, trying to imitate the Galician voice and speech, he said:

"Little girl, can you tell me whether a certain distrustful señorita who does not believe in the sincerity and

constancy of a man madly in love with her, lives here?"

"You! Is it really you?" responded Señorita Castro laughing.

"I, myself, Gerardo Roquer y Paz at your service. . . . You told me to come back and here I am dying with impatience to hear the one little word you have to say to me. Has the moment arrived at last when you will pronounce it or must I throw myself headlong into the sea to make you believe in me?"

"What a surprise!" she procrastinated, but cordially offered him her aristocratic, little, white hand which her admirer eagerly grasped and passionately pressed. Still holding it he pleaded:

"Surprise? Nothing more?"

"It seems to me that you are in a very questioning mood."

"Yes. I have come expressly to examine you on certain points which I wish to verify."

"Point number one?"

"Do you love me?"

"Second?"

"Me, do you love? . . . Carmen, Carmiña! . . ." supplicated her adorer putting his whole soul into his trembling voice, while drawing her still somewhat disconcerted by her great surprise and joy, towards him: "For God's sake, relieve me from this suspense! Say that you believe in me and love me."

"But do I really need to *say* it? . . . Ay, dear heart, you are but a poor diviner!" she responded illuminating with her wonderful smile his soul, the heavens and the earth—the universe.

"Bless you for those words which make me so happy. A poor diviner! Perhaps. But how could I believe in such good fortune when you were so cold, so distrustful?"

"I had good reasons to doubt you."

"But you see how you were mistaken. The last thing in the world you expected was to see me here."

"*You* are mistaken, Gerardo. I was expecting you. I do not know why, but often when someone came to the door, I thought it might be you."

"Did anyone tell you I was coming?"

"No; it was a presentiment."

"A presentiment or a desire?"

"I do not know. . . . You are so full of questions and have caught me at an inopportune moment. Do not take any notice of anything I have said."

"It is too late. You do not speak words lightly. I know that you love me. Tell me again; but in clearer, plainer words. You do not know how my soul thirsts to hear them."

"No, I have said enough. Now, I am going to turn questioner and you must answer me many things."

"I know how to say only one thing."

Ah, but that was just what she wished to hear him say, only in answer to various questions: What had he been doing, of what or of whom had he been thinking these two months since she had seen him? How could he ever leave his gay Madrid to come to this quiet, country place utterly devoid of amusements. But, in sudden alarm:

"Probably you will not stay long?" and then she was afraid that she had showed her fear.

"Yes, gloria!" replied Gerardo reëstablishing her peace of mind. "I shall be here as long as you are. . . . I have already secured accommodations at the tavern. We are neighbors; don't you see?" again trying to imitate the Galician accent and manner of speech. "But then! I have come to see you, to be with you every day."

And he told her of his delightful wanderings on horseback through the Mariñas in search for "The *Pazo* of Happiness" and his arrival at José Lapido's.

"But how stupid to keep you standing out here in the sun! I must have lost my wits. Pardon me and come into the house."

And throwing the whole contents of her basket at once, she went up the steps followed by the student whom she took into a light, cheerful living room looking out onto a prolific garden.

Gerardo was pleasantly impressed at once: the solid mahogany furniture consisting of a very large sofa, several soft cushioned armed chairs and carved highbacked chairs cane-seated, invited comfort; besides, there were

cabinets and bookcases and a table in the center on which were books and magazines Spanish and foreign; lithographs and colored prints on the wall and family photographs on small tables and cabinets, always presided over by the King and Queen.

"Sit down. Papa will be here in a minute. I will go tell him you have come."

"But are you going to leave me all alone?"

"I suppose you will not be afraid?"

"You are mistaken. I am horribly afraid of being left alone in a room and, besides, I am sure that your father has not yet awakened from his siesta. . . . And we have a great deal to say to each other. Let us not disturb him."

"Papa never takes a siesta. I will be right back."

"Don't leave me alone!" he called.

"What? I like brave men. Now you stay right here and behave yourself," she menaced him with her forefinger and hurried away.

She found Don Laureano reading "The Faith" in his office.

"Papa! *Papáño!!* she cried rushing to her father and throwing her arms around his neck: "He is here! He has come! He loves me!"

"Who is here? Who loves you?" inquired her kind father: "But how stupid I am! It must be that rascal of a Madrileño who has stolen my little girl, that has come."

"Rascal? No, papa. He is a dear, good boy. You see, he has left Madrid to come here, just to see me, and because I told him to come back."

"All the same, whether you like it or not, he is a rascal to have robbed me of part of your affection."

"No, *Papáño*, you must not think that! You know that I love you as much as ever. I think I love you even more now. . . . Yes, more. . . . I love him in a different way which I do not know how to explain."

"No, it is one of the things which can never be explained. It is a law of nature. The important thing is that he should be worthy of you and love you as you merit being loved."

“Yes, papa! He loves me, he loves me! I am sure of it and he is very good; you will see.”

“I do not have to see it, dear, my eyes are your eyes.”

Don Laureano welcomed the student with his noble courtesy and was much pleased to hear him praise the country of which he, himself, was so fond and to hear how he had longed for Galicia while he had been in Madrid; and the loving father let himself be conquered by the agreeable youth who, besides, had the delicacy to tell him at once what had brought him to this little corner of paradise in the Mariñas.

Happy were the days that followed! Gerardo Roquer lived in an ideal world luminous with joy in the light and cheerfulness of those fields, that river, that sky rendered all the more resplendent by the presence of a beautiful woman irradiating happiness, and the love of two youthful hearts.

Carmen, now sure of her lover's heart, abandoned herself to him with confidence and let him see into the depths of her pure, innocent soul. She was a very different woman from the reserved señorita he had known in Santiago de Compostela—a childish, simple, ingenuous Carmiña.

“Ay, dear heart!” she answered when Gerardo remarked the difference: “Then, I had to be very grave and serious, for you as well as for myself or else you would have escaped me.”

And she told him now, from the very first day when she had seen him in the Hórreo so sad and wrapped in his own thoughts, she had taken a great fancy to him.

“Appearances are so deceitful, you see. No, you need not get puffed up with pride; if I had known then—as I do now—the cause for your sadness, I should have hated you. But you took me unawares and, as I noticed that you were always dressed in black in those days—to deceive stupid, little country girls—I supposed that you, like me, were mourning some family loss and I was sorry for you. Little idiot that I was! Afterward, when you used to pass us every day without taking any notice of me, I was furious. I thought to myself: ‘I am not so homely, that he should treat me with such disdain.’ I

could have choked you! Later, they told me your story and, also that you said, I was a disagreeable, pretentious country girl. 'The conceited thing!' I said; 'And what does he think he is?' I was rabid, but not half so rabid as later when I was told that you said, I was only a distraction to pass the time away in that tiresome place. Imagine how I felt, I who already loved you and had been so pleased to watch you—hidden behind the curtains—walk up and down in front of the house."

"So! You used to see me walk by the house?"

"Yes, every day. As you used to come at the same hours, I knew when to be on the watch; so, at five minutes before the time—twenty-five minutes after twelve and five minutes before four—the pretentious señorita stationed herself where she could see the gentleman from Madrid walk by."

"And I never saw you—never suspected you were there!"

"I did not intend that you should.

"Madrileños are so presumptuous, that you would have thought immediately, I was crazy about you. . . . When they told me that, I would not go near the gallery—for a whole day. You were so persistent that I began to think, after a while, you really must be interested in me; but I did not wish to let myself be deceived and had strength of mind enough to return your letters and not to say 'yes' when you declared yourself so vehemently at the Candlemas Ball. I said to myself, if I should say 'yes' now, he would forget me at once. Besides, I wished to be sure that your love was a love which would endure. . . . That you had forgotten the one, you had left in Madrid. And that was the reason, I kept imposing conditions and required you to study, because I wanted to have a serious, formal man—a worker—and not the madcap who, everybody said, you were. . . . How happy I was when I received the news! 'He did that because he loves me and because he is trying to make me love him,' I said to myself. I had just about made up my mind to say 'yes' when you forwarded me the telegram, you received from your father. Then, I thought: 'He will go back to Madrid and meet that woman and probably forget all about me.'

How I cried! How I prayed to the Virgin! ‘Holy Virgin, dear Mother, Mother of all, Mother mine! Do not let Madrid rob me of him! Let him come back to me as he has promised! Let him come back and love me as I love him!’”

And these things were said with that sweet accent, that smooth, flowing Galician rhythm which seems to have been made to murmur words of love; these things were said in the twilight, on the balcony overlooking the garden and the lands beyond, as if they descended from heaven with the dew of the falling night—in the peace of the dusk of evening.

A light breeze undulated the grain fields and ruffled the waters of the delta, which came warm and sweet to timidly kiss the land without an equal. A thin mist slowly veiled the mountain tops. From afar, faintly, through the thick trees which crept from the sea to the heights of Fiobre, came the sound of a bell answered by the crystal voice of the Church of the Morujiño. The incense of attenuated films of smoke from the village cottages rose like prayers of thanksgiving. Now and then a belated bird flew rapidly by, peeping with fear, impatient to reach its nest. The outline of everything gradually became indistinct and faded away. All was quietude—softness—peace. A sweet, gentle and pleasant melancholy took possession of their hearts. The lovers held each other’s hand and were silent. The silvery notes of the chapel bell sounded the Angelus. “Love, love!” they said to the lovers.

From across the meadow, over there by the sea, could be heard a feminine voice chanting in long cadences which receded farther and farther into the distance until they died away as if lost in the branches of the trees, lulling to sleep the birds in their nests.

“I love you, because, I love you;
Make me to love, my jewel!
Oh teach me how to love!”

XII

Without the necessity of our happy friends pledging their words with the solemnity of an oath, we may believe that never, since the world was molded by the Paternal Hands which rule it, did any of his creatures ever enjoy a sky more blue, an earth more propitious, a sun more radiant, than in the beautiful, ineffable days which followed the arrival of the Madrileño into the glory of the Mariñas.

Everywhere, in the trembling leaves of the trees, in the timid flowers by the wayside, in the mysterious movement of the clouds that canopied the sky during those delicious, characteristic, Galician days on which the light was of the softest tone of blue, the lovers found a divine stanza of the eternal poem of love.

Every morning, the Madrileño lightly climbed the steep, stony path which seemed to him a smooth, even highway simply because it shortened the distance between the *Grand Hotel* of Tatín and the Pazo by a few minutes.

In the lookout at the end of the walk, under the dense covering woven by the jasmines, honeysuckles and trumpet vines of the rustic summer house, she was always waiting for him, engaged in one of those interminable pieces of crocheting with which fiancées calm their impatience and accompany the rosy pictures of their dreams, mindful only of the joy in their hearts.

On arriving at a point below the lookout, the lover would take off his hat and wave it with a graceful gesture, inwardly entoning a hymn of joy.

Already the sun had risen for him!

She laughingly pelted him with honeysuckles and jasmines; he catching them kissed the flowers fervently and then put them into his buttonhole and around his hat.

And there they spent the whole forenoon till it was nearly luncheon time, conjugating the inexhaustible verb

“to love” and, when obliged to tear himself away would say: “So soon?”

In the afternoon, their talks were in the grateful freshness of Señor Castro's favorite spot in the garden. Don Laureano liked to read his old, musty books which often showed the nibblings of disrespectful mice, seated in his high-backed stone chair in front of the granite table flanked by two tall cypresses, the noble cypresses of the Mariñas, which stood guard over the summer house. A crystal fountain, the Providence of the garden, sang its bucolic at one side. Every now and then the señor, who from this point of vantage superintended his workmen, would get up and go to give orders to the gardeners or direct their work. Then, the lovers would look into each other's eyes and all was said in one word:

“Gerardo!”

“Carmiña!”

Sometimes, they would take a walk to one or another of the picturesque places in the Mariñas. With the keen interest of the lord of the manor, proud of his lands, Don Laureano took great pleasure in showing his estate to the Madrileño, not allowing one corner to escape the notice of the wondering eyes of the urban who, the more he saw, the more he admired.

What do you globe trotters, even if you have traveled from one end of the world to the other, know about scenery, of panoramas, of the ostentation of nature if you have not realized the joy of beholding the amazing beauty of the deltas, the rivers, the mountains and valleys of Galicia?

“I tell you, friend Roqüer, I have spent many sad days among the Swiss lakes,” affirmed Don Laureano very feelingly: “and I have never seen anything to compare with this poetic river of Sada. ‘River of dreams!’ ‘Lake of fantasy!’ ”

There was no country *fiesta* to which Don Laureano and his daughter did not take the stranger. Those *romerías*!¹ Freixomil, Sampayo, Bergondo, the Fragachan, the Remedios; the never to be forgotten return from the

¹ *Romerías*, pilgrimages is the nearest English word, but the *romería* is a kind of mixture of county fair and religious festival.

Caneiros in little rowboats decorated with flowers, singing as they floated slowly, slowly down the river between its luxuriant banks, in the sweet and grateful melancholy of the Galician twilight! . . .

Civilization had not then marred the water course nor bad taste the charming highways and byways, with their assassinating ideas of imitating the cities. There were still in the world mantillas, nets, ear-rings and pretty things with which the pretty girls adorned themselves; still, the country youths wore jacket and sash and peacock feathers in their wide-brimmed hats.

For a mile or more before reaching the scene of the *fiesta*, the road was infested with beggars exhibiting the loathsomeness of their sores or the sadness of their lack of limbs to the charity of the passers by and exhorting them with endless tales of woe in whining voices.

“Pious souls, christian souls! Take pity on a poor unfortunate! Look at this sad mirror of humanity! The hand of the Lord deliver you from evil! May you never see yourselves in my condition; I was once young and happy like you and now have no means of livelihood except the alms bestowed by compassionate persons like you.
.”

“Brothers!” was crying another converted into the divine justice: “Have a bit of charity on this poor creature, so that *Our Señor* will save you from the torments of hell! May the sovereign Pilgrim of Freixomil deliver you from misery like this!”

In the chestnut grove near the church, if not in the churchyard, there were carts with butts of wine—the deceiving wine of the Rivera or the sharp wine of Castilla—surrounded by men in a more or less happy state of intoxication; venders with their regulation baskets of antediluvian sweetmeats which had to be taken back to those who remained at home; crafty, blind beggars collecting pennies from everyone by squeaking their primitive bagpipes or scraping their discordant violins, accompanied by a woman shaking the tambourine; rascally knaves selling lottery tickets without the backing of a lottery; fast girls mixing with the others in the *muiñeira*,¹ very serious, with

¹ Muiñeira, a Galician dance.

downcast eyes and upraised arms, their adept fingers clacking castanets, while they pointed their toes at their jumping partners dressed in gala-day velveteens trimmed with shiny black cloth, their wide-brimmed hats cocked to one side and pulled down over the back of their necks, with a peacock feather¹ stuck into the ribbon in the challenger's position; the procession, appealing in its simplicity, marching through the paths in the vicinity of the church, led by the clergy, the average one looking as if he were about to suffer a stroke of apoplexy after his sumptuous banquet at the rectory; the noisy street bands from the country towns; the groaning bagpipes; the fireworks, the bells, the laughing, the excitement, the joy. . . .

Carmiña went about in triumph among the peasants attending the *romería*, while the Carlist priests respectfully welcomed "the King's loyal supporter"; the dignitaries of the village government came prudently, and artfully to greet the Señor of the Pazo in their adulatory manner and the girls in their rustic finery, blushing returned the salutations of the Señorita Castro, which she so graciously dispensed to all. The peasant girls of the villages and hamlets in the neighborhood, laced themselves into the nefarious but picturesque bodices which suffocated them, and wore the accompanying costumes of the most approved fashion on the banks of the Sada—before there were any villainous dressmakers to copy the Paris styles from the pictures in magazines—and adorned themselves with their native trinkets. They were proud to be associating as equals with the Señorita Castro and tried to find out by close scrutiny the secret of her elegance and distinction, although with simple gown and coiffure.

Soon, some arrogant country lad would take a decided stand in front of the Señorita of the Pazo—bowing and making such a sweep with his hat that it almost touched the ground—and resolutely demand:

"Señorita Carmen, if you will dance a turn of the

¹ The custom prevails in Galicia, as in the Austrian Tyrol, of wearing a feather—in the Tyrol a partridge or other wild-bird feather, in Galicia a peacock feather—stuck into the hat ribbon; in the back of the hat if peacefully inclined, in front as a challenge.

muiñeira with me, I shall be so proud that I would not salute the Archbishop of Santiago if he should come to visit us."

All her friends and the peasant girls knowing what a good dancer she was, always urged her to go out; she usually demurred at first, but then, soliciting with her eyes Gerardo's permission which the youth willingly conceded, she would turn up her skirt—securing it with pins, that it might not interfere with the dexterity of her feet—and go out into the ring. The proud fellow would give a joyous leap of ostentatious triumph.

Forward and backward agilely, merrily, going through a series of steps and courtesies, he trying to catch quickly the figure she introduced and endeavoring in his turn to faze her with some new, difficult turn which she would be sure to pick up immediately, winning the enthusiastic applause of the circle, the Señorita Castro and her partner would dance for the entertainment of their audience.

"It's no use, my boy! Impossible!"

Then another would rush into the circle and giving the first a good push—"Get out of here!"—making his attempt to introduce a step too difficult for the expert dancer; all to no purpose; no matter how complicated, she would catch it at once and receive renewed applause seasoned with hearty laughter.

"You can't get anything on her, boys," jokingly would cry their elders, when, having outdanced two or three partners the señorita of the Outeiro was retiring, smiling and out of breath, with deep red roses blooming in her cheeks, giving respite to the bagpiper who, probably, would be just about ready to cease playing for lack of breath to inflate his bag.

And afterward, the return! The return in the dying day between provocative challenges and sweet evening songs extending their melancholy over the fields, as the stars began to peep forth one by one to illuminate with their quivering light the poetic regress from the *romería*!

At one of these *fiestas*, Gerardo had a surprising encounter.

The noisy, country street band—cornet, clarinet, tam-

bourine, bass drum and kettle drum—was playing a very lively polka with the cornet obligato indispensable to the *romería*.

“That *Panduriño* is the very devil, himself!” they were all saying.

Certainly there was something of the diabolical art in all those fantastic trills and running scales and fancy flourishes of the cornetist, which greatly pleased the gathering and earned its deafening applause and encouraging shouts that obliged him to repeat the *pezzo*.

“Hurrah!”

“Hurrah for *Panduriño*!”

“Why, I believe that that *Panduriño* is my housemate and friend, Adolfo Pulleiro. . . . I could swear it was he, only he hasn’t a moustache; ‘the silent Pulleiro,’ as Barcala calls him, who is always studying and never takes part in any of our fun. Can it possibly be our quiet Pulleiro playing in a country band?”

As the perspiring, but pleased cornetist got down off the table which served as a stage for the musicians and passed near to the party from the Outeiro, after having received the offerings of the crowd, Gerardo detained him saying:

“Has the Señor Hippocrates become so proud through all his triumphs, that he does not care to speak to his old friends?”

“Roquer! You here?” responded Pulleiro between pleasure and embarrassment, shaking the hand so cordially extended to him. “These are bad days for me. The other afternoon I ran across the Mantiñan brothers, ‘the sad twin doves,’ as Barcala used to call them. They pretended not to know me. To be sure, I made out that I did not see them; not because I was ashamed of what I was doing, for there is nothing dishonorable about it. . . . On that account, I thank you all the more for having spoken to me. . . . I had seen you before, but . . .”

“That was unkind of you, Señor Pulleiro; you behaved very badly; and by way of chastisement, I invite you to drink one of those fermented *boliches* of Sada, mixed with Bavarian beer from Betanzos,” and turning to his fiancée: “Carminha; Adolfo Pulleiro, my physician, friend and

house companion. Pulleiro; the Señorita Castro. With your permission, Carmiña, I will return directly."

On the way back to the Pazo, the Madrileño related to his fiancée the story of self-sacrifice and energy, told him by Pulleiro. His parents could have lived in comparative comfort on their small farm, with the additional income from some lands rented by his father, if it had not been for the swarm of children—six girls and a boy—with whom heaven had favored them. His father was a thrifty man who in his youth had been a musician in his regiment and utilized his talent Sundays and holidays to earn a little extra money by playing in Panchón's band. His son being fond of music, the father taught him the fingering of the cornet, which seemed to come natural to the boy, who really learned more from his own intuition than from his father's instruction and, through practice, had become the expert cornetist who had given an exhibition of his skill that afternoon. His parents convinced of the boy's brightness, wished—like all Galician parents—to educate him in a profession to liberate him from the servitude of the land and planned by, only God knows what sacrifices and privations, to send him to the Institute at Lugo and afterward to the Medical School of the University of Santiago.

When Adolfo finished college, his father died. For the time being, it was impossible to realize his dream of entering the Medical School; he was obliged to superintend the farm and, for a year, he spent his time mostly on horseback going over the lands daily. One day, Panchón offered Pulleiro a place in his band. Engagements began to rain upon the band as the fame of *Panduriño's* playing spread through the Province. "*Panduriño plays better than Panduro; you know.*" Pulleiro's sky began to clear. He soon organized his own band and was in demand far and near for all the *fiestas*; he even went as far as Portugal. There was no rest all summer long, but, thanks to that, he had been able to save up enough money to enter the Medical School.

"Although," had said Pulleiro, "I had more engagements than I could fill, the pay was small and the expenses of the family great, and I should have hardly been

able to take the course if our good Doña Generosa, on hearing my circumstances, had not offered me board and lodging gratis. The University fees are high and books are more, but I am almost through. Only one year more. . . .”

“I will help you; I shall be glad to,” offered the kind-hearted Madrileño: “I know that my father . . .”

“I thank you, indeed, Roquer; but you must not be offended if I do not accept. It is not haughtiness; it is because, once, when I began to play in the band, I was insulted by an imbecile señorito, which taught me to strengthen my fortress and, today, I am proud of my cornet and no matter how many honors and titles fortune may bestow upon me, I shall always keep this instrument, because it has made a man of me in teaching me to be strong. I am sure that it will be with real regret that I shall play my last obligato when the time comes for me to give up my band. I could give it up now, as this term will be the beginning of my last year, but I want to make enough to buy a modest set of surgical instruments—such as they sell at *Fiofio*’s. I shall not be satisfied till I see shining in my office, all in a glass case, this arsenal of surgery with which to frighten the patients who come requiring the major operations which are to win fame and riches for Dr. Pulleiro. . . . And besides, I shall have to play to lay by something to tide me over the period between the time I get my degree and the time I shall have built up a paying practice. . . . Adiós, they are calling for me!”

“Come and take supper with me later and we will talk over our illusions and recall to mind our absent friends.”

“I thank you very much, but, when we have finished here, we shall have to start for Padrenda, where we are to play tomorrow at the celebration of San Mamed, and we have to walk eighteen miles.”

“But, are you going to walk?”

“Oh, yes, we cannot afford to ride.”

“I tell you, Carmiña,” said the student; “there is a great deal more to Pulleiro than I ever imagined. I am going to write to my father tonight to procure for me in Paris a fine outfit of surgical instruments with which to

surprise *Panduriño* when we get back to Santiago. He is a wonderful man."

"Would you not be capable of just as much energy if circumstances required it?" asked his fiancée.

"I do not know."

"I can tell you, if I were in trouble. . . . I do not know what. . . . But, supposing someone were trying to do me an injury or take something away from me. . . ."

"My love, for instance?"

"Yes, your love which is the most precious thing in the world to me. . . . I am sure, I should defend it with all my force. I do not know just how, but I feel that I could muster as much courage as a man."

"My, how strong!"

"I don't know. . . . But, I do love you so. . . . Gerardo, dearest, tell me, swear to me, that you will never, never forget me!"

"My life, my soul! Nothing but death could ever make me forget you!"

"Even death could never make me forget you, dear heart. I shall love you forever and ever and ever! Even if you forget me. . . ."

"How could that be? What force, what superhuman power could be strong enough to tear the love for you from my heart? It is absurd even to think of such a thing. We have everything in our favor; all circumstances seem to tend to unite not separate us. Sometimes, I feel that our love is stronger than ourselves, that it must be controlled by some power beyond; perhaps, our mothers have met in heaven and arranged to make us happy. Not only from Madrid, but from the end of Patagonia, I feel, you would have attracted me to Santiago. Our names are written together in the Book of Destiny. I, for you. For me, the glory of your love."

"Yes, dearest heart, yes! No matter, whatever might happen, whatever the circumstances might be—even if you killed me, I should still love you. Although you should cease to love me, I shall love you always. Always! My fate is to love you."

"And mine, also, to love you. I am thine, my little

Galician, forever! Irrevocably thine; joyously, happily thine!"

In the peace of the night, sounded afar the evening song. The fire-flies were twinkling in the meadows. A light breeze, the soft breeze of the Galician Mariñas, caressed them like a holy kiss coming from the unknown, mysterious beyond, from on high where the souls of their mothers—those blessed saints—were looking out of the windows of heaven to watch their happy children and smile at them from the stars.

* * * * * *

And soon afterward . . .

One morning, Gerardo had just gotten up—since he had lived in Paradise he had become an early riser, in order not to lose a minute of his good fortune—and was looking out of the window, watching the landscape disentangle itself from the light cover of mist under which it had been sleeping and appear in all its morning freshness, when he was alarmed by the excited Tona bursting into the room.

"D'yuh know?" she blurted out: "Antón, a servant from the Pazo 's down stairs. Don Laureano 's ben took bad, very bad, he says."

Gerardo rushed down stairs; there, at the door, was Antón on horseback.

"I don't know what's the matter with him, señor, but it's somethin' awful bad; when the señorita went into his room, he couldn't move nor speak. The señorita was terrible frightened and told me to go fur the doctor as fast 's I could, but, stop an' tell you on the way. Yuh better hurry, señor, I'm athinkin' he's adyin'."

Without waiting for another word, Gerardo made a bound for the path which climbed the hill not even going up to his rooms for his hat, while Antón set off at a furious gallop in the direction of Sada.

The Pazo was in great consternation. Servants were running back and forth all upset. The farm hands and women from the village were silently crowding around the door of Don Laureano's chamber. Once in a while, a moan could be heard and a murmured lamentation, which would be checked at once by an order for silence. A maid was hastening into the room with a hot blanket that she

had just heated by the fire at the moment of Gerardo's arrival. No one was able to give him any very definite information.

"He 's very bad, very bad!"

"He got a shock in the night. An' him so good!"

"Don't speak about it, señor, the father of the poor is dyin'!"

Gerardo went into the room and Carmiña came towards him with her hands clasped imploring him for some encouragement:

"He is dying, Gerardo; he is going to die and leave me!" she sobbed.

He pacified her and approached the bed-side of the sufferer. Señor Castro's face was white and drawn, his eyes glassy and his mouth twisted as he lay there immovable. Only a slight agitation of the fingers and the rattle of his labored breathing denoted that there was still life in that body already a prisoner of the Implacable. Gerardo laid his hand on the cold brow and then felt the pulse of the patient, without imagining what tremendous consequences could be deducted from it, but felt desperate, that he was powerless to alleviate the condition which was conquering that body.

Carmiña bending over her father, was anxiously calling:

"Papa, papa! Speak to me! It is Carmen, your little girl! Do you hear me, papa dear? Speak, for God's sake, speak! . . ."

Overcome by the vision of death which showed itself to be so near, Gerardo consulted with the women from the village and the most radical remedies of country medicinal lore were applied to the poor man—even to a hellish plaster of alcohol, mustard, vinegar and nettles, which Manuel Rilo, an old sailor who had sailed the seven seas and saw the dark side of everything, recommended.

All was useless. Gerardo who was holding one of the cold hands in his, felt the pulse become weaker and weaker and knew that life was fast ebbing. One moment, there appeared to be a lighting up of the countenance and an expression of anxiety filled the eyes of the dying man; he seemed to be making an effort to speak. Gerardo stooped and lifted Carmiña from the low chair beside the bed,

where she sat sobbing, and gently pushed her towards her father:

“Kiss him!” he said.

Carmiña clasped her father as if to protect him from the Invisible. And then, gave a cry and tightened her grasp. Some women entered the chamber and falling to their knees mingled their prayers with the desperate sobs of the orphan. The bell on the chapel of the Pazo slowly, mournfully tolled for the departing spirit and something mysterious seemed to creep over all. Outside, could be heard the dolorous lament of the people in the village, bewailing the passing of their benefactor. All fell to their knees.

“Such a saint!”

“How charitable he was!”

“He was the consolation of the poor!”

“His door and his heart were always open to all!”

Gerardo closed the fixed eyes with the greatest respect, his heart full of this sorrow which brought vividly to mind that other of his own; he kissed the cold forehead and tenderly separated Carmiña from her father's body; at first, she resisted feebly, but then, allowed herself to be led away to her own room where Gerardo delivered her into the hands of her maid and the housekeeper and returned to the death chamber; the priest and the physician had just arrived covered with dust, panting from their useless ride.

All the youth's nobleness of heart and his love for Carmen were demonstrated in those days. He helped to lay out Don Laureano and attended to all the arrangements of the funeral, freeing Carmiña from these trying details which usually claim the attention of the ones who are mourning the death of their loved one. After the service, he closed the casket; and, it was he who was the last to leave the cemetery where in the shadow of the humble church they left the remains of the good and noble Señor Castro to rest in the peace of God and the bosom of the land he loved so well. In fact, he took upon himself paternal cares and responsibilities which was a balm to the sorrow of Carmen, and she felt less alone with him at her side.

Lastly, it was he who—although dreading to do it, yet realizing the necessity—advised Carmen to send for Don Angel Retén, he being her nearest relative, and wrote the telegram notifying him of the sudden death of his brother-in-law and begging him to come at once to the Outeiro.

The following afternoon, a coach stopped at the portico of the Pazo from which Don Angelito with his wife, her small body wrapped in a long mantle of the deepest mourning, alighted and entered the house, showing signs of deep affliction.

Carmiña burst out crying anew at sight of them. The *Maragota* sat in a corner and sobbed as if she had lost her father or her husband or her son.

After a while, they all became calm and Carmiña presented Gerardo, telling them of all he had done on this sad occasion, and they expressed their gratitude to the student, *Maragota* lauding him to the skies in her honeyed phrases.

“As to that, he of noble birth and breeding shows it in his actions.”

Nevertheless, far from being pleased with her praise, the young man was disagreeably impressed and had a feeling that there was a false note in it. For her part, as soon as the recent arrivals were taken away to their room, Carmiña grasped her fiancé’s hand and overcome by some invisible, impending danger, cried:

“I am afraid! Do not leave me!”

As the days went by, however, there seemed to be nothing to justify this presentiment and fear. One could not ask for more prudence and discretion than *Maragota* had shown from the day of her arrival. She seemed to try to make herself even smaller, in order not to be in anyone’s way and to pass unnoticed; she was ever assiduous to relieve Carmen from all petty cares and annoyances and distract her from her sorrow; she went quietly about the house with a large bunch of keys of which she possessed herself one day to open surreptitiously a desk, and continued to keep *to save her niece the trouble of looking after things*, and wore dangling from her belt like a real housekeeper; she took particular pains not to disturb the young people in their conversations which were Carmen’s sole consolation.

More than ever, did the señorita Castro feel attached to that man, on whom she concentrated all her love and by whom she was shielding herself from the fear of loneliness. Gerardo rectified the first bad impression which *Maragota* had made on him, with that carelessness and easy confidence so common to youth; he came to the conclusion that Jacinta was an excellent woman wholly free from the ridiculous pretensions of her son.

Some afternoons, when there were no visitors, Carmen and Gerardo would go out into the garden. It was Jacinta who suggested their doing it and thereby gained the grateful approval of Roquer.

"You will make yourself sick, poor child," she said to Carmen: "staying shut up in the house all the time."

The engaged couple walked slowly through the paths, distractedly pulling sprigs of the myrtle which bordered the walks, looking into each other's eyes and talking gravely—without lyrical flights, their melancholy words giving a poetic sadness to their conversation—about their plans for the future. When he should have *finished* in June, they would be married. Gerardo was sure of his father's consent, for he had spoken to him in Madrid about his intentions of which his father approved and had already been informed by the sedulous Don Ventura long before Gerardo himself really knew them. As Carmiña was left without near relatives who could in any way compensate her for the loss of her father's affection and because it was the desire of both, they decided not to put off their marriage till the period of mourning was completed.

"Señorita," said Gerardo to Carmiña one day, making her laugh for the first time since the loss of her father: "I have the honor to solicit your adorable, white hands for the fortunate señor Don Gerardo Roquer y Paz, here present"—And remembering the wording of the society column in the Galician Gazette—"The happy union will be consummated next June when spring smiles on gardens and fields"—if it does not rain.

"But it is such a long time till then! A whole winter of rain and law in that gloomy old Santiago de Compostela!"

“You will have me there to make it tolerable,” said Carmiña.

That made Gerardo check himself with a sudden fear. “Where will you live in Santiago; in your own house or at your uncle’s?”

“Where else could I stay? I could not remain in my own with only servants and I should not wish to ask my uncle and his wife to close their house and come to live with me. I should prefer to stay here, but it would be exacting a still greater sacrifice to oblige my uncle to give up his affairs, customs and comforts and bore himself with a long winter in the country, and, besides, I should be farther away from you.”

“Yes; I could never stand it so long without you.”

“As you do not wish me to go into the Convent of Purification, as a boarder . . .”

“No, I could never consent to that, but rather than to have you live in the same house with Octavio Fernández Valiño, Octavio *Maragota*, I would rather have you remain here on any pretext. I will improve every opportunity to run out, if only for a few hours at a time.”

Carmiña felt that Gerardo attached too much importance to Octavio’s pretensions of being a rival, but, to relieve Gerardo from any uneasiness, she would gladly remain there or go to the convent if her uncle wished to return to Santiago. The greatest hardship would be that they could not see each other; however, thinking of the great happiness to be realized within a few months, those of her confinement would pass quickly.

As it turned out, Valiño, himself, solved the problem for them. One would think that he had heard their conversation; three days afterward, a letter was received from him by his mother, in which the brilliant young orator informed his proud parent of his intention to go to Madrid to work for his doctorate, and asking her to come to the station at Betanzos to bid him good bye.

They had to agree that he was very discreet. Evidently, he considered himself definitely given up and had thought it wise to take himself out of the way. “Well, good riddance!” Before he returned with this grand title of

doctor of law in his pocket, they would be married. Their sky cleared from clouds and the future assured, they continued their walks in the garden, thinking only of themselves—the keen edge of their grief a trifle dulled—letting the hours and the days slip by.

But one morning, Gerardo met Don Angelito, as he was on his way to the Pazo, intently reading the Galician Gazette; the Madrileño bowed deferentially and continued lightly and impatiently on his way. Don Angel turned and called him back.

“One moment, Roquer,” he said, carefully folding his newspaper and putting it into his pocket. “I have something to say to you.”

“Something grave?” inquired the student alarmed at Señor Retén’s seriousness.

“Why, no, not exactly grave; no, because, thanks to God, there is time to prevent it from becoming so.” And by a thousand circumlocutions he gave the young man to understand that there was considerable talk in the village about his staying there and spending his time at the Pazo.

“It is absurd, I admit,” added *Maragota’s* husband: “but, you know how people will talk. They do not understand how you can keep on with your courting, walking together so unconcernedly in the garden, so soon after the death of poor Don Laureano—God rest his soul. People in general are evil minded and rather than accept an innocent, logical, explanation, they prefer something more complicated if by it they can pollute the purity of a spotless character.”

The impulsive and excitable Gerardo became vehemently indignant, but Don Angelito with his greater experience of the world, succeeded in calming him. He impressed upon him, that it was not by storming around or fighting anyone, happily, that this calumny which was beginning to taint Carmiña’s reputation, could be arrested. It required very different actions to shut the mouths of the malicious. Gerardo, who loved Carmiña so well, would comprehend the necessity of making the small sacrifice of taking his departure so short a time before the date that, in any case, he would have to leave, which would allay

all gossip immediately. Don Angelito could sympathize with the lover in having his idyll interrupted; but, after all, the sacrifice was not great; it was not cutting short his stay more than a couple of weeks.

But why this cowardly flight from those miserable ones who did not come out and accuse him in the open?

He must not shut his eyes to the facts of the case as it was. Gerardo was a gentleman, a true and respectful lover, willing to submit to anything not only to ward off an injury to his beloved, but, even the slightest discomfort; a noble soul who would not permit his presence to cast a shadow on the nimbus surrounding Carmiña's head. And besides, his niece, at present, ought to see to the execution of her father's will; an inventory of all the property had to be taken. Carmiña would have to spend hours and, maybe, days going over her father's papers, and, naturally, Gerardo would have the delicacy not to offer to help her in so personal a matter or even be present, because he would appear to be trying to estimate the fortune of his promised bride. In recompense, Don Angelito promised to expedite matters, in order to hasten their return to Santiago.

Gerardo yielded. It seemed perfectly absurd, but, so many reasons expounded with such subtlety finally persuaded him, as the cunning *Maragota* had foreseen when making her plans.

"Of course, you will not say a word to my niece about your motive for leaving tomorrow. I will attend to that. To inform her of the danger to her reputation would be an imprudence."

That afternoon, Gerardo stammeringly and blunderingly announced to his fiancée, that he was obliged to go away the next day. Carmiña felt a deadly chill pervade her whole being. She looked at Gerardo with astonishment mingled with distrust and began to weep bitterly when, on questioning him, he could give no explanation for his sudden departure, but answered her shortly and enigmatically.

They were in the garden sitting in Don Laureano's favorite place, witness of so many sincere avowals. The sun was sinking behind the leafy ruins of Mañobre.

Women in their red petticoats, cutting fresh grass for their heifers, made bright spots in the meadows.

All was peaceful except those two hearts.

Gerardo tried to comfort Carmiña with passionate assurances of his love; he repeated some of the considerations which he had heard from Don Angel that morning; the will, the inventory, the little that he was cutting short his stay. . . . In two weeks, three at the longest, they would see each other in Santiago. She would be occupied with her affairs, but he was going to bury himself in the boredom and sadness of that gloomy, old Compostela. . . .

Carmiña said nothing, but wept silently. He took her hands in his and covered them with passionate kisses, repeating his oaths of love.

"No, do not swear," said Carmiña: "although you cannot explain your sudden departure, I wish to believe in you. But something tells me that this separation will bring us great unhappiness; it already has."

The next morning, they sadly bade each other good bye. From the balcony, she watched him through her tears, ride slowly away, turning his horse every few steps to wave his cap in another farewell. At last, he vanished in a turn of the road. Carmiña tried to hide her tears from the *compassionate Maragota* who was standing by her side.

"Poor fellow! He was bored!" remarked her tormenter. It was as if she had been stabbed through the heart.

"Bored!"

All day the odious word rang in her ears.

"Bored!"

That night, in the solitude of her chamber, she wept bitterly, desperately, thinking of this explanation of the sudden departure of her fiancé, which he would not give her, but which had escaped Jacinta, apparently, unconsciously.

"Bored!"

* * * * *

Meanwhile, *Maragota* was busily writing in her own room filling sheet after sheet of note paper, with an expression of great satisfaction on her long Semitic face with its thin nose and pointed chin.

“My dear son:” she began: “I hope, when you receive this, that God Our Señor and the Holy Virgin will be keeping you in the health and happiness which your mother desires for you. Mine is good, thanks to God.

“Well, my dear son, everything is working out all right here; the Madrileño left today. . . .”

XIII

Never, even during the desperation of his first days in Compostela, did the city seem so detestable as now. There was nobody in town—nobody worthy of consideration. The Alameda and the Herradura were deserted—or almost—these warm, quiet evenings; there were not more than two or three dozen persons of no consequence, because, only those who were absolutely obliged to, remained in Santiago at this season. The Casino was solitary, its vestibule devoid of its customary gossips, its billiard room silent, and the boys—so busy in the winter—dozing in the corners; the Rúa and the Preguntoiro without promenaders. “The House of Troy” was the most lonely place of all. Doña Generosa received the Madrileño with surprise.

“Why! So early? This is the time you will be bored! When I got your telegram, I thought it was a joke.”

Later, while Gerardo was attempting without appetite to eat a light supper, the good señora tried to entertain him.

“Everybody stays away from Santiago in the summer; as long as the weather is so beautiful, the people don’t come back from Villagarcía or the country. Most of the families have some kind of place to which to flee in the hot weather. For many of them, it is an economy; they spend their year’s income in Santiago in a few months and live on bread and broth in the country the rest of the time. Then there are some others who say they go away, but, really seclude themselves in their houses so not to wear out their dresses, hats and ribbons.”

It was certainly not a conversation to cheer up a lonesome youth. He hurried through his supper and then started for the Casino to get his coffee. Taking a seat at one of the tables in the vestibule, he pensively and sadly watched the few passers by who walked slowly, suiting

their gait to the pace of the city. All at once, a young man came out of the billiard room and, planting himself in the middle of the doorway, began to dance the *jota*, very serious, not minding the laughter of the people outside, till they called to him from within.

Gerardo asked one of the waiters what the performance meant.

"They are the officers of the new companies which were sent here a few weeks ago when our guard was changed. He is Lieutenant Naya, the liveliest of the bunch. When they are out of money, which is almost every day, they play dominos, and the one who is beaten has to pay a forfeit; so he had to dance till his companions called him."

Roquer made a disdainful gesture. He felt out of sorts with himself, the fun-loving officers, the waiter, the promenaders and even a group of boys who were leaning up against one of the shop windows singing. Leaving the Casino, he went for a walk in the Herradura; there was nobody there, save a few lovesick couples crossing over into the shelter of the woods or nearby corn fields.

The warmth and quietness of the night, instead of acting as a soothing balm to his pain, aggravated it; they brought too vividly to mind the happy days in the Mariñas and he reproached himself—now that it was too late—for having interrupted them so stupidly. He soon tired of the scene and returned to the house to sit up all night—until overcome by sleep about sunrise—writing to Carmiña. In spite of just having gone to sleep, he awoke early according to the habit he had formed in the country—and because his heart was so heavy—and went out in person to post the letter, so that it would go by the diligence and enviously watched the departure of the Carrilana with a sinking feeling of homesickness.

On his way back, he called to inquire what had become of Augusto whom he had not met anywhere.

"He went to Carril a few days ago," answered his mother: "because there was nothing to do around here."

On receipt of this information, he sent a telegram to his friend: "I am here. Bored. There is nobody. Come home soon." That same afternoon, he received this reply:

“Surprised. What you doing there? Come here. Villagarcía delicious. See letter.”

The next day, with Carmiña's longed for letter—two sheets full of reproaches—that he was impatiently awaiting at the door of the post office and devoured that very instant, there, under the portal of the Quintana, the postman also handed him a thick envelope from Augusto. The young fellow wrote—in his usual, enthusiastic style—praising the delights of Villagarcía, “the Galician San Sebastián! The place is a dream—the river! the beach! the country! *and* the dancing!! Oh, boy! Dance in the hall in the morning, dance in the hall in the afternoon, dance in the evening. There are some of our friends here, too; Boullosa and Faginas who is flirting with Socorriña Valoira; almost every afternoon Quiroga comes over from Nogueira, where he is conscientiously boring himself to death staying with his uncle, the priest; Barreiro who is running around after a pretty little girl with whom he fell in love the other day at a wedding over a cake representing a bridge—the bridge of sighs; and, lastly, that rascal, Abollo, who is a star at all the sports—water, land and girl. The best of all, we get up big picnics on the Island of Cortegada. Sometimes, we take a canoe and paddle up the river and then float down, singing. You know how good the fish are here in the Mariñas. Yesterday we were in Cambados and got as far as Barca de Ribadunia. Wonderful! You know the saying:

‘Said the devil to Jesucristo:
 “All this will I give unto Thee,
 Except Fefiñanes, Cambado(s)
 And Santo Tomee.”’

As verses, they are very bad; but, as truth, impeccable, boy. And you in that hole! Courage! Come!”

Gerardo refused the invitation. He was not for amusements. He resigned himself to the sadness and ennui of taking lonely walks in the Hórreo, as he used when he first came to Compostela.

One morning, he received a letter from Casimiro. Like Augusto, the poet urged him to come away from Santiago.

“... For goodness' sake! What are you doing in that place? I should think, this was the time to make me that visit, you have been promising. It would be a real charity, for Túy, with all its beauty, is more lonely and quiet, even, than Santiago at this season of the year; you ought to take a little trip and gladden my heart with your company.

“Caramba! You do not know what it is to be three months without meeting a soul with whom you can carry on an intelligent conversation. I go out around the town and do not meet anyone; I go to the Casino; nobody there. I pass the time reading old books of my father's—the science I have stored up!—and writing verses; but that does not suffice for a man of my mental activity and talkativeness. Come quickly, before my tongue gets rusty for lack of use. I will reward you by letting you talk of your love to your heart's content. Could you ask any greater condescension?

“If you do not care to come for my sake, come for the sake of the trip, an incomparable journey through the most beautiful portion of Paradise on earth. Only to cross in the train that indescribable piece of the Mahía, from the Casal to the Esclavitude, and for the grace of setting your sinful eyes on the plain of Iria, you ought to buck up and come. It is a mortal sin to die without seeing the divine country which inspired Rosalía's most touching poems. When the train reaches the summit at the station of Padrón, look out of the window on the opposite side. There, not far from the railroad, you will see,

‘In its prison of roses and thorns,’

a little cottage amorously surrounded by trees. Bare your head and pray. There, for forty years dwelt Rosalía; there, she wrote her last poem; there, lived the soul of Galicia. In another country prouder of its glorious ones, this would be a place of pilgrimage where the people would come with grateful hearts to honor their fellow countrywoman, to take away a handful of earth trodden by the feet of the poet and to look out from the sacred balcony with the wooden balustrade, on which,

. . . Exiled from her country,
 With neither home nor kin,
 She watched from her veranda
 The lights so pale and dim . . .

“Then, Cesures, the cheerful; the poetic river, Ulla; the lonely Torres del Oeste (Towers of the West); and the beautiful river of Arosa. All this is two hours by train, which will seem to you but two minutes. With another two hours or so by diligence—through entrancing scenery—about one o’clock, you will cast anchor in the Plaza de la Herrería in Pontevedra. Station and restaurant. But, if you will prescind from the elegances of a restaurant with its stale food, go across the Plaza and seek out the house of the famous Doña María, you will get a luncheon fit for the gods and owe me a debt of eternal gratitude for the suggestion. I am in doubt whether, when I finish my course, to get married or establish myself in this venerable boarding house to spend the rest of my life in the worship of its soups, stews, *ajadas*,¹ rice with milk, *torrijas*² and all the savory dishes with which the skillful señora regales her epicurean guests. Your gastronomic duties fulfilled, you get into another diligence and, on to Redondela. Nine miles more of glory. At Redondela, take another train as far as Guillary. Half an hour. From there, a short distance by coach and, at nightfall, you are in Túy.

“At the first review, you will consider this journey more complicated than a lesson in penal law explained by D. Arturo *Patacón*. But the scenery, my friend! And the incomparable cuisine of Doña María!

“Besides, when once you are here, the perspective of no end of delightful excursions. We will go to Vigo, ‘the pearl of the seas’; another day, we will cross the Miño³ and invade the neighboring kingdom, the kingdom of Madeira. And, if you like, we will conquer it, although

¹ Ajadas, garlic sauces.

² Torrijas, slices of bread soaked in a mixture of eggs, white wine and oil, and fried.

³ Miño, the river which forms the northern boundary line between Portugal and Spain. The Portuguese spelling is Minho. The pronunciation is the same, because the Portuguese *nh* is practically equivalent to the Spanish *ñ*. In either case, pronounce meen’-yo.

the good Pepiño may oppose us. You see, even a foreign excursion; this to write up for Tafall in the Gazette."

Gerard replied excusing himself, explaining that his bad humor would make of him but a poor companion; he would cast a gloom over the rivers, the valleys, Túy and Casimiro, himself. But, by return mail, came such a kindly letter from Barcala with a postscript written by his father—and it was so terrible in Compostela—that he wrote to Carmiña: ". . . My loneliness has reached such a point of desperation, and, as it makes me feel all the worse to be here and see the places which were once illuminated by your presence and now seem void and are painful for me to look at, I am going to find solace in the distraction of travel."

Really, his chief object was to find someone with whom he could talk about her.

He continued in his letter explaining his trip with copious reasons from which Carmiña derived only the one reason which was that he had again become bored, as when he broke the enchantment of their love dream and created this painful situation.

No; he did not love her. Carmen felt that she had been justified in doubting his constancy. He had made a mistake and she had allowed herself to be deceived. Because—she was adding to those disconsolate thoughts which with all her hopes she was trusting to a letter—she knew very well the motive for his sudden departure, which he took good care to hide from her. He was bored in her company and had gone away to flit from one place to another in search of the amusements which he could not find in the sadness of the Pazo, when it would have been so easy to return to the Outeiro to console her aching heart.

Gerardo never received the letter she wrote. It was lost in the mail—or intercepted.

Still, it was difficult for her to resign herself to the reality and her spirits were in a measure buoyed up by the constant hope—without foundation—that he would come back, and, every day, she used to watch the path from the observatory at the end of the garden with a vague feeling that she would see him lightly running up from the village; when she was in the courtyard, she kept hoping to have

the gate open again and the student enter ās before, and inquire in his jocular manner—trying to imitate the Galician accent:

“Little girl, is there a distrustful señorita living here . . . ?”

To Casimiro Barcala who received the Madrileño in Túy with great joy and an inexhaustible patience for hearing him talk about his love, the reason for his leaving the Pazo, which he was relating one afternoon as they were walking towards the *circo* through the deserted promenade, seemed a very poor one and he told his friend plainly, what he thought about it.

“I think you did very wrong to concede to Don Angelito’s requirement. Those Reténs—or, I might better say, that *Maragota*, for Don Angel does not really count in the family; he is only a figurehead—are not to be trusted.”

“You are mistaken! Jacinta is the personification of humility and insignificance.”

“Don’t you trust that kind of insignificance. Look at the Miño. It appears to be a peaceful, well behaved river which occupies itself only with the one object—that of reaching the ocean as soon as possible—and goes on in the even tenor of its way not meddling with anyone, but, every year, quietly and innocently in its meanderings which are apparently most inoffensive, it engulfs a number of lives. Be on your guard, my boy!”

Bah! Casimiro, also, was distrustful, suspicious . . . ! Gerardo could not reconcile himself to this trait in the Galician character, which made the people always suspecting enemies in ambush. It seemed a contradiction that these smiling skies, this optimistic nature should breed such pessimists. When he expressed these sentiments to Barcala, he replied:

“Very well; but, all the same, do not be too trusting. Remember, you have a double dose of *Maragotas* to digest and they may cause a terrible nightmare.”

Indeed, the misgivings of Casimiro were correct; appearances were deceitful. The most observing could not detect anything wrong in the *Maragota’s* conduct. She continued her rôle of humility and insignificance. It is true, that, by the tacit resignation of Carmen, it was

Jacinta who managed the household at the Pazo;—the Pazo, at present, silent and sad, which had, but of late, been so full of joy and illusions—however, her management was strictly confined to the housekeeping which was carried on in the quietest and most unobtrusive manner. She had a way, peculiar to herself, of giving orders in a low firm voice, which admitted no disobedience. She never reprimanded nor questioned; nevertheless, she succeeded in having her orders executed more promptly and thoroughly than the colonel of a regiment.

Carmen consumed by her grief, absorbed in her thoughts, let her do as she pleased.

The *Maragota* respected her desire for solitude; but, whenever the occasion presented itself, she tried to console the lonely one by speaking indulgently about her fiancé. She explained to Carmen, that, although she was a countrywoman, she was a woman of experience and a mother besides, so could appreciate the afflictions of youth. For this reason, she could understand things better than a young girl and found nothing strange nor reproachable in Gerardo's conduct. To be sure, he had gone away a couple of weeks before he had intended; but, consider the facts of the case; he had come here to spend the summer happily and, instead of the pleasant time he had expected, he had found himself confronted with death and the Pazo filled by Carmen with the tears and sighs of her mourning.

“Woman, consider! Is this any place for a young fellow of twenty? Besides, it may be as I said, he has some attraction to call him back to Santiago.”

Carmen acknowledged the logic of Jacinta's explanation; but, did she think, she was defending Gerardo? No; could a man in love be bored in the company of his fiancée; much less, leave her in the hour of her misfortune?

“No; no, Jacinta; the more excuses you make for him, the worse his actions seem to me. He went away telling me, that he had to return to Santiago, and, hardly is he there, before he starts off with some of his great friends, which makes it plain to be seen that he cares more for them than for me.”

“Woman, he was probably bored there, it is so lonesome at this season.”

“*Bored!* Always that horrid word! You used it before. He came here to amuse himself this summer. It was stupid of me not to think of that. Without doubt, his father sent him back to Santiago to get him away from the temptations of Madrid and he thought that life in the country would be less intolerable than in a provincial city out of season. . . . And then, I was here to help pass the time. What a fool I was! More than fool! No, no, Jacinta. Make no more excuses for him. Whatever you try to say in his favor turns against him. See how he neglects to write to me! Four days since I have had a letter, although he promised to write every day.”

“Woman, calm yourself! Probably, he is busy.”

“Busy! With all your good intentions, you cannot excuse him to my mind. Busy! With what?”

The *Maragota* was exasperated.

“My child! You would make a saint lose patience! I am speaking for you too, trying to comfort you and get you out of this disconsolate state; for my part, it is neither here nor there; Holy Mother! What do I care about this fellow? You are the one who interests me and God knows that my intentions are good. If I do not succeed, pardon me, because I mean well.”

She went away offended: Carmiña was left alone with her unhappiness, feeling the blow of Gerardo's departure more keenly than ever now that she saw his conduct in the light of *Maragota's* excuses. Her uncle's wife was a common, low-born woman, which accounted for Gerardo's conduct seeming natural and innocent to her. What did Jacinta know of delicacy? That was the reason that she took his part and Carmen respected her good intentions—but, really, in *Maragota's* reasoning, she found more foundation for her distrust in her fiancé than ever and nothing to strengthen her confidence.

So, day after day, craftily and surely, with the patience of a spider and the astuteness of a wicked woman, *Maragota* was little by little entangling in her perfidious web, the unwary Carmiña whose only knowledge of the world and men had been gleaned from the timid nuns in the convent where she had been educated.

Each day, this evil woman sharpened some new poisoned

dart with which to pierce the poor girl's heart. Every night, Carmiña wept in the solitude of her chamber for the loss of her illusion and the certainty of her unhappy future.

XIV

The middle of October brought Samoeiro to Santiago all decked out in a new suit and overcoat—"the last word" in fall fashions, according to this gentleman from Brollón—which would have made a third rate comedian green with envy. Our friend was insufferable and strutted about like a turkey cock, he was so puffed up on account of having made the acquaintance on the way from Curtis in the diligence of the members of the magnificent company led and directed by the indefatigable D. Frederico Villapando, alias *Repolo*, which had just launched itself upon the town. This time, he had "put one over" on that "Johnny on the spot," Augusto who wasn't on the inside track with the actresses this year.

"She's a peach, boys! You wait till you see the little Andalucian! She is full of pep! She has been first soprano at the Esclava in Madrid and says, she knows you, Roquer. Ah, Señorita Pacheco! We are already on very good terms."

"Mademoiselle Pacheco does not sound to me in the star class. Probably, she is some popular girl from the chorus; but this does not detract from the glory of your conquest, irresistible 'Don Juan' of Brollón."

It would not be worth while to mention Samoeiro's return to "The House of Troy," notwithstanding his clothes and conquest—for which, we must take the word of the conqueror—if it were not for the fact that he brought with him two *empanadas*,¹ two magnificent *empanadas*, of savory lampreys rich and juicy, as a gift to the gastronomer, Don Ulpiano Mazaira, canon of the cathedral, who was charged with the oversight of the celebrated student, Jesús Samoeiro, during his university days.

¹ Empanadas, a mixture of meat or fish highly seasoned with garlic, onions, peppers, oil, etc. and covered with a kind of crust; something like meat pies.

Although he tried his best to smuggle these two huge, succulent achievements of culinary art into the boarding house, their contraband odor was immediately detected by the keen noses of the "Trojans" and they became the all-absorbing topic of conversation at the table. The boys made all kinds of propositions, set forth their cleverest arguments and, finally, begged the *Ostrógoth* in the noble name of friendship and comradeship to let them partake of this—judging from the heavenly smell—portion of the authentic, celestial manna.

They said so much, that Samoeiro became alarmed for the safety of his pies. As he was obliged to go out directly after dinner, he tried to think of a place to put them, where they would remain undisturbed in his absence.

Javierito Flama told the tale of the pies to Manolito and Casimiro later, when they met in the *Café del Siglo*:

"What do you think, the big dub did? He called me into his room with the greatest secrecy and told me how worried he was for fear you would steal his *empanadas* and in what a terrible predicament he would be, as they had been entrusted to him for the canon. Knowing that my trunk had a special lock which could not be picked, he asked me to let him put them into it. I, having your interest at heart and thinking it a good way to secure this rich treat, removed my clothes and let him put the *empanadas* into the bottom of my trunk. But they were no sooner inside than he locked it and put the key into his pocket 'for greater surety' he was fresh enough to tell me."

"And you let him take it away?"

"How could I help it?"

"Idiot!"

"Fool!"

"And that isn't the worst of it; he took possession of the key to the room too."

"We have just got to get hold of those *empanadas*!" exclaimed Casimiro resolutely getting up from the table: "If it is only to save our dignity."

"That's so!" corroborated Manolito preparing to go out with no less determination.

"But how?" argued Flama; "when the trunk and the room door are both locked?"

"That is the least of our difficulties. The key to my room will open any door in the house."

"And the trunk? They are English locks."

"How long since we have taken to importing from the English, Señor Flama, Don Javier? Well, let's have a look at them."

They were, indeed, English locks and in their manner of expediting matters, the boys hardly gave themselves time to try more than two or three keys.

"We shall never be able to get them out this way. Will you let us take the bottom off your trunk?"

"Man. . . .! Will you do it very carefully?"

It was only a question of pulling out a few nails and removing one of the boards, so that they could reach in and extract the prize.

"Tomorrow, we will nail it back again properly when we have more time; now, let us just lay the board in its place and hurry to the tavern with these and at night. . . ."

At night, Señor Samoeiro was boiling with rage—roaring, groaning, blustering. His face was terrible to behold. Barcala wrote some verses in class about him next day:

"His eyes were shooting flames;
His mouth was spouting fire;
With his tail, he lashed the air.
'A ferocious beast was he!'"

"I just want to know who the thief is! Let me find out and you'll see!" raged the terrible *Ostrógoth*.

He stormed menacingly.

"B r r r r !"

From time to time, a little dry cough was heard from first one room and then another and a compunctious voice clamoring for mercy.

When he was called to supper, Samoeiro, rancorous and desperate, refused to associate with his fellow boarders.

"I won't have anything to do with those—those . . .

I am going to find another boarding place and move the first thing in the morning and then I will settle this matter afterward. You needn't think, I shall forget it."

"What are you talking about? Leaving this house?" said Barcala who, as the most authorized person of the house, was ready to sacrifice himself on the altar of friendship and exposed himself to the great danger of mounting to the lion's den where the infuriated beast was foaming at the mouth. "And do you think that we shall let you go away like this? You, our Benjamin?"

"It was a mean, low-down, dirty trick, Señor Barcala. There are no words to express it."

He was simply rabid, tearing his hair as he stamped back and forth through the room in his extreme desperation—

He shook his mane—
What grief, what pain!
In his *dolor*,
He paced the floor.

"It's outrageous, Señor Barcala! Outrageous!"

"Now see here! Never mind the 'señor' but come and have your supper in our saintly company. You know that we all love you."

"Let me alone, let me alone! I won't answer . . ."

"I didn't ask you a question."

"What I want to know is who stole my *empanadas*!"

Suddenly, Casimiro had a bright idea; he went up to Samoeiro and whispered insinuatingly:

"How much would you give?"

"I don't know. . . . I would give. . . . I would give. . . . Two dollars!"

"Honestly?" questioned Casimiro very seriously, firmly grasping his arm.

"Honor bright!"

"Hand over the spondulix; I know."

"And you will tell me the truth?"

"With all the details."

"Who was it?"

"Count out those beans."

"I will give you eighty cents now and tomorrow . . ."

"No; you have got to plank the two hard round iron men right down, and then, I will tell you who stole them and how. I will even tell you where they are, man!"

"On your word of honor, will you tell me where they are?"

"How many words do you think I have, man?"

"I will give you a dollar!"

"I'll never give up my share of the *empanadas* nor betray my comrades for that."

"Well, here are the two dollars. See them?"

"Give them to me."

"You tell me first."

"No, Samoeiriño; you are human. Let go."

"Swear that you will not fool me."

"May I be struck deaf, dumb and blind if I don't tell you."

"Here, take them. Who was it? The truth!" anxiously.

"Are they good ones, Samoeiro? Let me sound them."

"Yes they are, man, yes they are. Who was it?"

"Well then, to clear my conscience and fulfill my vow. . . . It was I, Samoeiriño!"

"YOU?" menacingly.

"I! What is the matter?"

"What's the joke?"

"That is it; just to play a joke on you. And now I am going to tell you where the *empanadas* are."

And taking Samoeiro down to the dining room, he exclaimed, pointing to the abdominal regions of Manolito, Madeira and Flama:

"Inside, there, you will find the *empanadas*. In pieces, to be sure, but there is none lacking."

"I told you, Barcala, that I wouldn't stand for any fooling."

"I'm not fooling, Señor Samoeiro," indignantly protested Casimiro: "It's no joke!" and taking his knife from the table, he dramatically threw it at the feet of the *Ostrógoth* with a dramatic gesture and said reproachfully: "Take it, you doubting sinner! Open the bowels of my

friends with my own knife and be convinced! If you are Saint Thomas, I am Guzmán, the good, of 'The House of Troy.' "

He made another dramatic gesture and calmly, dignifiedly sat down and began to eat his supper.

Unhappy *empanadas* and unhappy two dollars—the consequences that they brought!

After supper, Casimiro, Manolito, José Madeira and Javier Flama decided to go to the theatre and insisted that Gerardo should go with them, to see the first presentation of the newly arrived company. In passing the Circo de Artesanos, the gambling place of the lower classes, the poet had an inspiration; ordering the others to wait for him outside, he ran in. In about ten minutes, as he did not come down, Manolito went up *to see*; in fifteen, Madeira; and, at last, Javier and Gerardo.

There was Barcala at the table with a pile of all kinds of money in front of him—gold, silver and paper. There was no counting it.

"Come on, Casimiro," said Roquer.

"After I play just once more."

The others not minding anything about what he said, gathered up the money and made Barcala come away, much to the disgust of the other players and fury of the bankers, neither of whom hesitated to express their feelings in no gentle words.

Once outside, the boys counted up the *haul*.

"Eighty-seven dollars and forty cents! Hurrah for Samoeiro!" cried Barcala giving a leap for joy. "That you may see what kind of fellow I am, I am going to get a box for us all and invite you to a champagne supper afterward, to do honor to the *empanadas*."

"As I come from the champagne district, I prefer to have *Riveiro* which I like much better—and you might give me the extra three or four dollars balance on my bottle in cash."

"You shall have the three dollars and the champagne too."

There is no use trying to describe the ostentation with which the group of students made their appearance in the

box nearest the stage—the posings of Madeira; the lordly manner in which Javier Flama pulled down his cuffs; the Olympic attitude of Barcala as he twirled his fascinating moustache and turned his back to Moncha—who had lately transferred her partiality to the new professor of International Law—and made a display of his intimacy with the chorus girls, although the majority of them were strong scented old hams!

About the middle of the first act, Augusto Armero presented himself in the box.

“What accounts for this luxury? Who has had a wind-fall? . . . Señor Don Gerardo Roquer y Paz, the beautiful prima donna, Señorita Pacheco, has commissioned me to ask you in what rôle she must address you, in order that your lordship may deign to recognize her. She said that she bowed to you when she first came onto the stage, but that Your Royal Majesty took no notice of her. . . . She called you a . . . I don’t know what. I can’t remember the string of names she called you. Come on and speak to her. She’s great stuff!”

“Who is Señorita Pacheco?” inquired Manolito.

“That girl who made such a hit,” answered Roquer: “*The Pachequita*. She used to be in the chorus at the Esclava and, as she was pretty and had a lot of confidence, they would give her a little part once in a while. . . . Tell her that I have died, Augusto.”

“One moment, one moment!” called Barcala: “This *Pachequita*; is she good fun?”

“You bet, she’s a jolly girl!”

“Are there any more among the feminine personnel, whom the eagle eye of our Don Augusto Armero has discovered?”

“There are three or four peaches, Casimiro!” replied Augusto kissing the tips of his fingers.

“Well then, señores, let’s go and have a look. I have a plan to enliven the mastication of Samoeiro’s *empanadas*.”

It turned out that, after the theatre, our friends, Señorita Pacheco and the four other best looking girls of the company, betook themselves to a private dining room

at the tavern of *Pepe el Masón* and tackled with the appetite of students and comedians, Samoeiro's *empanadas*, together with some savory tortillas and tender chickens prepared in a jiffy by the apt hands of the Señora *Masona*. During the dessert, at the request of the assembly which, by this time, felt as gay as a flock of larks, Señorita Pacheco sang some of her liveliest songs.

Then, Madeira, who felt it his duty to proclaim the superiority of his native songs, began to bellow in Portuguese.

One of the chorus girls—the third on the left—called him an old gander, and Manolito, her escort, had the unfortunate idea to tell him to shut up with that voice like a blatting calf's.

To Madeira, there could be no greater insult than to show lack of appreciation of the marvelous vocal qualities with which heaven had endowed him. He could forgive anyone who might not esteem his tambourine playing. . . . But, to ridicule his voice! . . . Before Manolito had hardly finished his sentence, Madeira, with all his force, threw one of the four empty bottles which he had in front of him, at the head of his insulter.

Fortunately, the missile missed its mark and went through the window which Señorita Pacheco had just partly opened, smashing it into a thousand pieces, and crashed down into the street below. Manolito, like a good citizen of Orense, felt that he must not only uphold the honor of his native town, but that of the morning star and the whole planetary system, and responded accordingly to the unexpected aggression of Madeira. The girls shrieked; the students yelled to the combatants for peace and silence, only augmenting the din; chairs and tables were overturned with noise of breaking china and glassware; the nightwatch sounded the alarm; frightened neighbors looked out of their windows. They ended up in the police station where Flama, Armero and Barcala tried in vain to convince Maroña, the pompous police sergeant, with bursts of marvelous eloquence, that *Pepe el Masón's* wine was the cause of the whole trouble.

Madeira protested—contrary to all rules of comradeship

and diplomacy—that the wine had nothing to do with it; that it was the fault of those ignoramuses—he looked at Manolito—who began to talk of music without knowing a word about it.

“But what can you expect from a man who has never been out of Orense in his life? I am an artist who has traveled all over the world; yes, señor, an artist who has received the applause of foreign audiences.”

“Really! Then, what are you?” sneered Señorita Pacheco: “a ventriloquist?”

Madeira grabbed the ink-stand to throw at the impudent minx and splashed everybody with ink.

“To the cell with him!” ordered Maroño, now fully out of patience.

“With me? To the *coop* with me?” roared Madeira seizing the club which the chief had before him on the table and brandishing it menacingly: “There are not enough nightwatchmen in Santiago to take me to jail! Ey, Madeira! The one who is able to get a crack at you, I’ll owe a dollar!”

Like a flash, Barcala, darted towards him and dragged him by the coat tails up against the wall.

“Do you want to compromise the whole lot of us?” he hissed between his teeth, shaking him: “Let go of that club!”

“Well, they . . .”

“Let go of it, I say! Nobody gives orders here but me, Casimiro Barcala! Do you hear? Now you shut up and be quiet!”

Madeira’s fury subsided and he was soon snoring in the corner like a pig, but he had rendered useless all of Barcala’s friendly negotiations. After this, neither reasons nor supplications nor threats made any impression on Maroño. The pompous sergeant had had enough of this *Trojan* gang. All that he would concede after much argument and pleading, was not to make a decision, but let them appear before the chief of police in the morning.

“Will he be here soon?” asked Señorita Pacheco.

“At nine o’clock.”

“This is a nice mess!”

"If you had spent the night in bed, no one would have molested you," replied the bad tempered sergeant.

"Ah, son! If, instead of my pretty face, I had your old, bewhiskered mug, I would always keep it muffled up in the bedclothes or my cape, so no one could see it," retorted the bold girl covering her face with her arm.

The sergeant of the fierce moustache began to bluster again; Barcala resorted to his rôle of conciliator and diplomat; Augusto threatened with the vengeance of the Mayor, Don Felipe Romero, who was so friendly with the students, with the Governor, the Secretary of State, the Archbishop, the press of which he was an influential member—being the theatrical critic and reporter on the Galician Sentinel which had just been organized by Juanito Vazquez Mella in opposition to the Galician Country.

"You may do what you like Sergeant Maroño," finally proffered Augusto—all the while trembling for the hour when his absence from home should be discovered—"but we shall bring all our resources of the law to bear against you; we have in our favor the statute 2857 and, of the penal code, article 3566 and the corresponding article of the Constitution, 280."

"The 101st," rectified very seriously Barcala.

"No, Casimiro, no. The 101st treats of the rights and duties of the deputies in the exercises of their charges."

"101 or 30500," interrupted the sergeant: "it is all the same to me, because Maroño laughs at codes, at constitutions and at you and, if you don't shut up this minute, I'll jug the whole kit of you."

And all on account of that old gander who was snoring like a Dutch uncle, perfectly unconscious of what was going on!

But that was not the worst of it, spending the night in that uncomfortable office in the Police Station under the eye of the crabbed sergeant with his big moustache; nor that the chief on arriving refused to decide the case and referred it to the Mayor who, before ordering their release, called them into his office and gave them a piece of paternal advice; but, that when they did at last get

out of the Station, it was noon and the square in front of the University was filled with curious spectators.

The news of the *imprisonment* of the *Trojans* had reached the cloisters in a greatly exaggerated edition and practically all the students were waiting to see our friends come out, some through good fellowship and the rest from curiosity.

“What a disgrace!” exclaimed Señorita Pacheco clutching Gerardo’s arm and cuddling up to him in an attempt to evade the inquisitive eyes of the crowd.

A scandal like that had never before been witnessed by the astonished city. For days, it was the sole topic of conversation in Compostela. The most absurd accounts flew from the tables in the cafés to the shops in the Preguntoiro and the porticos in the Rúa to the lounging rooms in the Casino, where the old gossips rolled over in their mouths like a savory morsel, the incident of the supper. Occurrences were so rare in this quiet town, that, when there was a bit of excitement to relieve the monotony, they held on to it till they had dissected it to the last atom.

You can imagine what a stir this made, for it had a touch of the piquant and was authentic; it was something which, practically, had never occurred among the respectability of these grave citizens.

The press could not avoid taking up the matter, but handled the subject with very different criticisms. While the Galician Gazette—in the columns of which appeared from time to time some of Barcala’s festive verses—reduced the affair to “a lark of no importance,” The Liberty took the stand of its being an offense to the morals of the city and cast irate reflections on a certain student brought up in the envenomed atmosphere of the Court, who, like the miasma from a malarial swamp, was spreading the poison of his influence among the youth of the place, until they had gone so far as to disturb with their libertinism the peace, the holy peace, of that christian town and failed in the respect due to the moral cleanliness and austerity of customs of which Santiago had hitherto been so justly proud.

Gerardo was desperate and when the contrite and confused Madeira came the next day to apologize, would not accept his excuses.

"When a man drinks till he gets drunk and makes a fool of himself, he should go off by himself and not stay around where he will compromise his friends," growled Roquer: "Would to God, this might be the end of the matter!"

What could be expected! Through letters and papers, the news arrived promptly at the Pazo. Jacinta did not have to call attention to it. It was Carmen who pointed out to Jacinta the article from the venomous pen of Jesusito Mollito in *The Liberty* which she found *by accident* where she was in the habit of sitting on the balcony, crocheting on her never-ending task and—in these days—thinking her sad thoughts.

"Now, what do you say? Defend him, defend him this time if you can."

"What is it?" asked *Maragota* taking the paper and very innocently reading the article, as if she had never seen it before. "Well, and what of it?"

"Why! Do you not see? It is he! He! This señor from *the Court*, this Madrileño, who is 'spreading the poison of his influence among the youth of the place.' It is Gerardo; Gerardo who has returned to his former life of depravity and scandal—openly, without shame—right in Santiago!"

"Don't take on that way, my child. Perhaps, it isn't he. There are other college boys in Compostela besides him from Madrid, the son of the colonel of the zone . . ."

"Augusto Armero? His inseparable companion."

"The best thing to do is to write to one of your friends in Santiago and ask about the affair."

"You are right."

She wrote to Moncha and in a few days received a reply:

". . . An abomination, a frightful scandal, the like of which was never known in Santiago. And they are bragging about it. Your Gerardo, at noon, the Plaza filled with people, curious to see them come out of jail, very

boldly appeared with the comedian on his arm—they say she is the same one with whom he used to carry on in Madrid. That other villain, his great friend, Señor Barcala, had another of the actresses on his arm. A horror! I don't see why the authorities did not send them all back to jail. The people are shocked; I can tell you. It's the talk of the town.

"I am thankful that I threw down that old weather cock last summer. The night of the scandal, he was in the box next to us and he kept his back turned to me all the evening. As if I cared! I didn't look in his direction once. He was flirting with the actresses all the time. They are perfect pills, too.

"They walk the streets, the bold things, and stare at everybody who looks at them. And the boys, what do they care, either? The sinners! Poor Jesús Mollido is going around with a black eye. Probably, one of them gave it to him, although he denies it, no doubt, through fear. It is all well enough for them to say that it was the first night they ever spent in the lockup. It is a great time they had! That old Madeira, they had to lug him home in their arms. It is a pity they didn't all have their bones broken. If I had been one of the nightwatchmen, I would have clubbed them so that they couldn't have gotten out of bed for two years.

"And what is that you ask about that presumptuous coxcomb, Augusto Armero? They are all in the same gang. And you don't suppose that Gerardo was going to be left in the house and not go out to parade his conquest. A great conquest! She is a dark, sloppy thing, they pretend to say is pretty; but, I don't see anything pretty about her. She is the one in the company, whom they are all crazy about. She gets some great ovations. . . . They are all bold hussies.

"Of course, Filo has gotten through with Augusto—and this time for good. I don't know what she could have seen to like in him, anyway. They have returned each other's letters. I was going to send back everything I have had from Casimiro—letters, photograph and the poems he has written and dedicated to me—but I thought it was too

much of a hint, and I wouldn't even take the trouble. No, I assure you, I never think of him; I don't care anything about him, but I am indignant that they should, as papa says, 'break with a violent hand the thread of our traditional customs,' and I don't know what else. . . ."

And so she ran on through four sheets of finely written note paper.

"And what have you to say now, Jacinta?" reproved Carmen.

"I have nothing to say, no advice to give. Such things are very delicate matters which it is better for persons to settle for themselves. You must examine your heart and consider not only your feelings, but your dignity. Who ever would have thought it of him! And he was such an agreeable young man and seemed so good. . . . But they say, she was an old flame of his in Madrid."

"That is the worst of it, Jacinta; he was in love with this woman and that was the reason that his father sent him to Santiago. . . . And now, not being able to go to Madrid, he has brought her to Santiago. The idea, that I should still ask what I ought to do. . . .!"

She burst out crying. She had done hardly anything but cry for two months. *Maragota* made every effort to console her.

"Don't take on like this. Such things happen to us for our good, to put us on our guard. That is the way they deceive us. The wretches! The faithless creatures! Don't cry, deary, don't cry."

"Leave me, Jacinta, leave me alone. I want to be alone, not to talk to anybody, not to see anyone."

She shut herself up in her room. Presently, she took from her closet a little box—the box in which all women keep their youth—and emptied its contents into her lap, letters and photographs; till there was scarcely anything left in the bottom—just a few papers, perhaps, a locket with a picture and some dried flowers. She did not see them—she did not wish to see them.

Slowly and laboriously she made them into a packet and, with a trembling hand, wrote on a sheet of paper—in mourning like herself:

“Gerardo: I am returning your letters. I beg you to return mine.”

She tried to think of a sentence to relieve the curtness of these lines; something which would give him a pretext to justify himself. Deep down in her heart, she longed to have him come back and to hear him repeat the vehement protestations of his love. Guileless child! She still had faith in him. Notwithstanding the evidence of his falsity and deception, she continued to believe in him, not accrediting these tale-bearers; but her dignity over-ruled her desire and she haughtily signed with a cold, proud C., did them up in a heavy wrapper, stuck it and sealed it and, with rapidly beating pulse, penned the address:

Sr. D. Gerardo Roquer y Paz,
Calle de la Troya 5,
Santiago.

She threw down the pen, raised her eyes to heaven, and her gaze encountered the portrait of her father; looking into those kindly eyes, she lost all self control and falling upon her knees, extended her arms towards him in child-like supplication, while, between heart-rending sobs, she called desperately:

“Papa . . .! Papa . . .!! Papa . . .!!!”

XV

It was a great day for Gerardo. Not only did he receive the package from Carmen, but a letter from his father, in which he expressed his indignation that his son should have returned to his former life of depravity and was shocking Santiago with his actions; and bringing to bear all his parental authority—as it was evident that his son's affection for him did not dictate a respectable life—ordered him to send this woman from whom he had already been obliged to separate his son once before, away immediately. “If you have any regard at all for the feelings of your father,” he continued: “you will turn over a new leaf and never again fall back into your dissolute ways. . . . If you will not listen to me, I shall have to consider that my son is dead—and I, myself, shall soon die of grief.”

Don Ventura! This was the work of his hand. He was the denunciator, without doubt.

“Without any doubt whatsoever, my boy,” corroborated Casimiro: “My lost father-in-law, the archangel Gabriel, guardian angel of the holy door of the morality of Compostela, it surely was. Ah, you ridiculous old guy, how much discomfort I should have caused you if I had married your charming daughter!”

“Well, you will see what I will *cause* him, I! No matter where I may meet him!”

Gerardo could not punch him as he felt like doing, for the meeting took place that very afternoon in the Casino at the most crowded hour, but he told him what he thought of him, very plainly, without any regard for his sixty years—or his two hundred years—and berated him roundly for having taken any stock in hear-say and alarming his father by writing such an exaggerated and calumnious account of a little happening without any importance, except that given to it by a bunch of old hypocrites, and accused the

Ex-Judge of Órdenes of letting his mania for hearing himself talk—in this case, seeing himself write—in his ridiculous, verbose manner, run away with him. He went so far as to tell the old man, that he was in his dotage and, after calling on Numen to inspire him with a name hard enough to call the old fossil, applied Barcala's epithet: "The last Roman."

"Behold the last Roman,
A musty parchment . . ."

"You last Roman, you are scandalized, because a few boys take supper with some girls, forgetting the *empanadas*, you are pleased to eat in the congenial company of *Michiña* or *Carabela*, as well as the rest of these illustrious men here present.

"Because, gentlemen," concluded Roquer: "I do not know who is justified in taking any such stand, when there is not one of you here about whom could not be brought to light some stories—about some more than others—of a *Michiña* and visits to a certain house of the Esterqueiras or adventures in the Matacanes Alley."

"Come, come, Roquer, calm yourself," interrupted Don Bartolomé of the unforgettable two counterfeit dollars, in a conciliatory manner.

"But it is the truth," interposed Barcala.

"Of course it is; everyone here knows it and, as there are only men present, there is no harm in saying it," insisted the Madrileño.

"We are all alike . . ." supported Casimiro: "And if we should begin to talk or take a notion to write a satirical article for the paper and began to describe . . ."

A cloud passed over the assembly and more conciliatory voices were added to Don Bartolomé's.

"And as for you, Don Ventura," said Gerardo turning to the ex-judge with his ultimatum: "I insist that you write to my father without delay—this very day—that you are as much too hasty as you are too great an *orator*; that this woman to whom I have spoken but that one night, is nothing at all to me and has no connection with that

other of whom I think much less than these old chatter-boxes here present. . . . And after this, you mind your own business and don't meddle with my affairs."

"Ta, ta, papa!" muttered Casimiro between his teeth, but loud enough to be heard by the others.

"Listen to me, insolent young man!" finally exploded Don Ventura rising in his most magnificent, tribunicial manner. "I deny with all the force at my command, your calumnious accusation couched in such impudent terms interspersed with facetiousness in very bad taste, with this pugilistic air worthy of a barbarian! When instead of vibrating in an atmosphere . . ."

He could not finish. Lieutenant Naya rushed in from the next room and, planting himself in front of the ex-judge, began to dance the *jota* with all kinds of grotesque contortions and gestures which caused the whole salón to burst into prolonged laughter.

Don Ventura made an attempt to spring at the "insolent young man," but Lieutenant Naya slipped dexterously between them with a comical pirouette, and the *last Roman* fell exhausted from his outbreak of rage, into his big armchair.

A little on account of the amusement afforded them by Roquer's attack on Don Ventura and much more from prudence, because it might be possible for the boys to carry out their threats of prying into their comings and goings and write the dreaded article, the old gossips pardoned the escapade and tried to soothe Don Ventura's ruffled spirits. The same ones who, the night before, had been so severe and inexorable, now became very indulgent.

"Bah! Boys will be boys!"

The one who was not willing to pardon was Don Ventura. The ex-judge could not forgive the contemptuous ridicule of his oratory and wrote immediately, irrevocably relinquishing the paternal oversight with which Don Juan Roquer had charged him and by which in his "pure loyalty and scrupulous zeal" he had caused "such grave displeasure."

The effect of this letter on Don Juan was somewhat tempered, because he received by the same mail one from

Gerardo in which, with sincerity and respect, he reduced the facts to the simple truth and reiterated the confirmation of his complete reform.

"That woman," he wrote: "is as dead to me as if she had never existed. You know that another love pure and saintly has complete mastery of my heart and, it has lately had a terrible blow, perhaps, also from the officious hand of that imbecile, Don Ventura."

As to that, his love continued to have blows. His letters were returned unopened. Carmiña did not even put her signature onto the envelopes. Then, Gerardo went in person to the Outeiro—but the telegraph traveled faster than he—and arriving at the Pazo, ran impatiently up the stone steps and breathlessly knocked at the door; he was expected.

Maragota, in person, opened it. "What a surprise! Who would have thought . . .!"

They went into the sitting room he knew so well. His heart beat so hard that it seemed in danger of breaking his bosom. Without any circumlocutions, he asked to see Carmiña.

"Holy Mother! Of course! I will call her at once. But, I thought, you were a little . . .?" smiling benevolently and maternally while winking knowingly.

Gerardo thanked Jacinta for her kindness and begged her to go to Carmen directly.

"Yes, yes. How impatient lovers are. Theirs is the feverish blood."

After waiting, what seemed to him an interminable time, Gerardo, himself, was just about to go in search of Carmiña, when *Maragota* returned with a very sad face.

"What is the matter?" anxiously inquired the lover hastening to meet her.

"Nothing. Calm yourself. These lovers' quarrels are nothing, although they appear of so much importance."

"But, what did Carmen say?"

"Carmen said that . . . Well, I just preached to her, but you know how she is. When she gets an idea into her head, you can't get it out. She is very much put out

and says that you have played her, I don't know how many tricks. At the worst, as I told her, they don't amount to anything; but my niece is like that and she said . . . You must excuse me, for I am just bringing the message; she said that she would not see you."

"No! Impossible!"

"Ay, Good Lord! And I was telling her one thing after another . . ."

"No, it cannot be possible that she would really refuse to see me! I thank you for all your kindness; you are very good, but do please go back and ask her to hear me. I must speak to her. And if she will not listen to me, it must be she, herself, who shall tell me so."

Complacently and docilely Maragota again left the room and after a while came back with the same answer.

"Nobody can make her change her mind. She says: 'No and no and no,' and that is the end of it. You know, we women are very set in our ways," she added compassionately and conciliatingly. "When we once make up our minds . . . The more we love a man, the more contempt we have for him when—but," insinuatingly, "if he scorns us, we always come around after a while. Yes, as my father used to say: 'If you want a woman to love you, just turn your back on her and look at another.'"

"Adiós, Jacinta! I thought that the mere fact of my coming would be more eloquent than all the stupid calumnies concocted about me by an imbecile. If she wishes it to be so, very well." He started to go out with firmness, but on crossing the threshold, he turned to protest again against the injustice of her treatment in not permitting him to justify himself. He looked up and called supplicatingly:

"Carmen! Carmen! . . . Carmiña . . .! It is I, Gerardo! Your Gerardo . . .! Hear me Carmen . . .! Carmiña . . .!"

Maragota stepped aside as if not to impede the vibrations of his voice and offered to intercede for him.

He called again in a pleading tone: "Carmen! Do come Carmiña . . .!"

No one responded. Gerardo convinced that she would not heed his call, painfully tore himself away from the Pazo.

"Adiós, Jacinta!" he said affectionately pressing her hand and turning his head that she might not see his emotion.

"Such is life!" replied the deceitful creature compassionately, pretending to be trying to hold back her tears.

When the gate closed behind the youth, a smile of triumph overspread her features.

"Call and call your Carmen, as much as you like, my lad! You think that *Maragota* is a fool, but *Maragota* put the dove in safe keeping this morning, far away from here. . . . Go along; write to her; call her, call her!" and grotesquely imitating him: "'Carmen! Carmiña. . . .!' Ay, this rich morsel is not for you; I am keeping it for another mouth better than yours, my dear Madrileño. You and your friends may well call me *Maragota*, but she is going to be the *Maragota*, because I wish it. I!" and she slapped her own chest till it hurt: "I!"

In the salón, she came face to face with the portrait of Ramona and shook her fist at it.

"You wouldn't have me for a sister-in-law and now you will have to have me not only for a sister-in-law, but a companion mother-in-law! How do you like that, my proud beauty?"

Everything may be had by perseverance. She, who had had patience to struggle so many years under such difficult conditions, had conquered all and, at last, found herself at the head of this noble family with nearly all her dreams accomplished; she, who had known how to dominate stronger wills than her own, was she going to be outwitted by a couple of young things like these? This had been an amusing game. It was now only a question of days. And she rubbed her hands together with great glee. "All that. . . . Puff . . .! Nothing." And she blew away an invisible particle from the air.

There would remain no clue to the student's visit, because she had taken great pains to get everybody out of the way, so that he would not be seen. Her niece she had

prudently sent over the other side of the river; Gerardo would go by the road. . . .” All that. . . . Pufff. . . . ! Nothing.”

Only that. . . . A few days afterward, Carmiña went to decorate the altar of the little church of Tatín, as was her custom Saturdays; the maid who accompanied her, remained in the vestibule the while chatting with some women; Tona, the tavernkeeper’s wife, came out of the sacristy where she had been making arrangements for the publishing of the banns of her niece, Eufemia, and saluted the señorita who made some pleasant remark to the woman; she was flattered by the attention and attempted to enter into conversation:

“Well then, and so yuh hed a caller at the Pazo; eh? He must be terrible in love to come so far, jest to hev’ that little minute with his sweetheart; eh?”

“What do you mean, Tona? I do not understand.”

“Oh, do yuh like tuh hear me talk about him, eh?”

“Explain yourself clearly. Who was at the Pazo? What visit do you mean?”

“Well, and whom should I be meanin’ but Don Gerardo who made a call on me as well ’s the señorita?”

Carmiña felt the blood in her temples beat furiously and her heart gave a leap. A mist gathered before her vision and she had to take hold of the altar railing to keep from falling.

“And he went to the Pazo?”

“An’ I suppose he did, señorita, bein’ how’s he took that road.”

“What else?”

“He come back in jest a little while—it couldn’t a been more’n a half an hour—and wouldn’t stop at the tavern. I beckoned tuh the coachman, but he told him tuh go on. ‘I don’t want tuh talk tuh anyone, Tona;’ sez he: ‘Excuse me. Adiós,’ sez he, and went right on. ‘God be with yuh,’ sez I tuh myself; for yuh do look awful sad, sure. What can ha’ happened tuh yuh?’ sez I tuh myself; ‘prob ’ly yuh had a tiff with the señorita.’ ”

“Are you sure that that was Wednesday, Tona?”

“Sure, it was, fur ’twas the same day’s we sold the

pigs tuh Ramon Jojó who was at the house when Don Gerardo went by."

"No matter how much you may be tempted, do not tell anyone that you have spoken to me, much less, that you saw the señorito."

"Now don'tche worry 'bout me, an' if ever yuh want anythin' o' Tona, Tona's right here to serve yuh an' what's more, her man an' her house; we know how much we hev tuh thank yuh fur an' how much we owe tuh the señor, God rest his soul."

"Thank you, thank you! Now go away, so that no one will see us talking together. Remember, be sure not to tell anyone that you have seen him nor that you have spoken to me about him."

"Never fear, Señorita; an' they don't get it from the air, they'll not from Tona."

The tavernkeeper's wife went on her way and Carmen remained rooted to the spot—her eyes closed to see better—not able to disentangle the confused mass of her thoughts. Partially recovered from her dazed condition, she fell upon her knees before the Mother of all and tried to pray; but could not concentrate her mind which persisted in wandering far from there, following turn after turn of a complicated labyrinth, without finding any way out.

Gerardo had been at the Pazo. This was undoubtedly true. Whom did he go to see? Who received him? Why did they not tell her? Wednesday. The evening before at supper, Don Angelito announced his intention to pay a visit to his old friend, the priest of Sampayo. Between themselves, *Maragota* and her husband, without consulting her, had decided that she should accompany him to cheer her up a bit and, although she had not cared to go, in fact had actually resisted, they insisted almost to the point of a command and there was no way but to obey.

"You see how much good it will do you;" argued *Maragota*; "always shutting yourself up and crying like this—if you keep on, you will make yourself sick."

It was gradually getting darker and darker in the little church. The Virgin's lamp was vaguely illuminating the brigantines which hung from the ceiling, the offering of

some navigator who had made vows in his hours of distress. On his stone tomb, the reclining figure of Fernán Pérez of Tatín was clutching the sword which lay on his breast, as if he required it to fight the shadows of fear that were flying around the lamp and the two candles on the main altar. Carmen prostrate before the Virgin continued looking with her eyes closed, pursuing the thin thread of light which began to enlighten her brain.

The maid brought her to reality by gently touching her shoulder.

Carmen crossed herself devoutly and commended her anxieties to the Virgin.

She went out to the portico. The august serenity of the magical, little valley of Tatín communicated itself to her soul and peace took possession of that spirit oppressed by so many sorrows. The sea breeze refreshed her; the beneficent trees extended towards her their branches which seemed like friendly arms; she felt the protection of Mother Earth and, suddenly, the light—a gift from heaven—penetrated her reason and she saw clearly.

She was being the victim of a great perfidy which was entwining itself around her to choke her, as the ivy, that poor chestnut yonder sadly dying among its happy companions in the grove. She was in a hurry to be alone and hastened her steps in the direction of the Pazo.

As soon as she reached the house, she closed herself into her room. She must have time to think.

“Are you sick?” questioned *Maragota* rapping on the door, jealous of the very air her prisoner breathed.

“A slight headache. Nothing more. I shall be all right after a quiet rest in the dark.”

“Did you meet anyone?” inquired *Maragota* of the maid.

“No, we didn’t speak to anybody,” replied the woman.

* * * * *

Alone in her room, sitting by the window, Carmen watched the sad winter moon come up from behind the black pines of Insua and dimly illumine the landscape and silver the river.

I was over there! thought the unhappy girl looking at

the other shore: I was over there when he came to the Pazo . . . And why? He could not have come except for one reason, to see me, to justify himself and ask pardon—to tell me that he loves me. And I did not see him, because they sent me away. . . . Why? . . . Oh, why? she anxiously questioned herself.

All at once, the image of Octavio Fernández Valiño rose before her mind's eye, and gave the clue to everything. They! Yes, it was they! Jacinta was the mother of that repulsive man. She remembered having heard that Don Angelito was his father. And here she was at the mercy of these two! Or of these three, because she suspected the hand of the son was active in these traitorous procedures.

Ever since she came to the Pazo, *Maragota* had been subtly weaving the net of her perfidies. The wicked woman! With what suavity, with what astuteness, she hypocritically defended Gerardo! Everything was the work of these monsters. She felt sure, that they had been the cause of her fiancé's departure; that, in some way, it was through them, that she no longer received letters from him; they wished to prolong the stay at the Pazo indefinitely, but pretended that it was necessary to settle affairs. . . . Even the scandal may have been . . .

No, the scandal was true; because Moncha would not deceive her. Perhaps, her anger at Casimiro's disdain had led her to exaggerate; but, unfortunately, it was true that that bad woman from Madrid was in Santiago. Might not that, also, be on account of pique? God only knows what those villains may have told him to get Gerardo away from the Pazo and her—she thought—for, on receipt of the package containing the letters which she returned, although that actress was in Santiago, did he not hurry to the Outeiro to see her? And did not that mean—something? Much! . . . And Tona saw him go away looking so sad. . . . What new infamy had this witch, *Maragota*, perpetrated?

She could not sleep. To the disconsolation of so many sorrowful days, succeeded faith in Gerardo, the happiness of feeling that he still loved her; but, at the same time,

other troubles and new fears tormented her. She saw herself alone and helpless, in the power of these enemies who were conspiring against her happiness.

Discouraged and worried, she was trying to think how she could get the better of their schemes, when, in her state of nervous excitement, she felt rather than heard the sound of fingers on her door. She noiselessly sat up in bed to listen and held her breath. The large, old fashioned latch was slowly, very slowly—it seemed to Carmen to take an interminable time—raised and the door was partly opened cautiously and silently, and, in the darkness, she divined a devilish ear turned in her direction, as if wishing to ferret out the secret of her thoughts. A century afterward, the door closed again as carefully as it had opened and she detected the steps of someone in stocking feet stealing away.

It was so dark that she was almost afraid to go to sleep.

What shall I do?—she said to herself.

Run away!—she resolved pushing aside the bed clothes.

Go away. . . . But, where and how? And supposing, she did; how could she justify her action? How prove the evil intentions of these infamous persons who were oppressing her with their care and interest and affection?

No;—she thought when she had considered the matter a little more calmly—this is not a battle to be won in the open. It is a question of self control and outwitting the enemy; of deceiving, also; of playing the hypocrite, too, however much it might be repugnant to her nature, but there was no other way to defend her love, her happiness, her life.

Because, let the madcap pranks of Gerardo be what they might, she was now convinced that his heart was hers. . . . And she was so much in love, so madly in love with this “rascal of a student,” as her poor father used to call him, that she believed herself capable of any measures, however heroic, to keep his affection which was her life, and did not intend to be overcome by the artful designs of these wicked persons.

Yes; she would be a hypocrite; she would be wily; she

would work her way slowly and cautiously; but she would make constant headway. It was a question of putting into practice the lessons which *Maragota* had taught her. . . . Tomorrow. . . . No; tomorrow would be too soon. . . . When *Maragota* should speak of him. . . . No; that would never do.

Bah! I am foolishly worrying myself. Let things take their course and, when the occasion presents itself, I will take advantage of it.

One moment, she thought of notifying Gerardo; but, how?—if they kept her so closely watched. She might get someone to help her;—but, who? Her maid? Tona?

Mistrust and suspicion which form the foundation of the Galician character, counseled her to caution. Whatever she might do, she must do by herself. When the time came, she would see. . . .

* * * * *

From that day, she let them take her anywhere they liked.

Little by little, to the great satisfaction of *Maragota*, she began to mingle with the people—the few persons whom it was possible to find in the *Outeiro* in winter, women who came to tell their troubles to the señorita of the Pazo and be consoled with her money and her kind words which were worth even more. Others “widows of the living” who brought their letters from the absent ones for her to read—the husbands who had gone to foreign lands to try to earn a better living for their families. Sometimes, she acted as amanuensis and, as she had that happy faculty of knowing how to put things, she wrote some very tender letters which gladdened the hearts of those so far from home, who received them.

And so the days passed slowly and monotonously at the Pazo, each charged with its burden of sadness and uneasiness. It was February and the trees began to blossom. Some of the emigrants returned and other men went away. Arrived the days of carnival, when there was masquerading among the boys and girls; in the kitchens they roasted chestnuts, cracked nuts, played games, sang songs and told

again by the firelight the well known stories of ghosts and goblins. With the coming of Lent, the Franciscan Fathers preached a mission in the church at Bergondo.

In those days, one morning, Don Angelito called Carmen to his office—the office of Don Laureano—and handed her a letter, saying:

“My child, a good, honorable, worthy man has written to me asking your hand in marriage. Whoever he might be, I should not feel at liberty to dictate in such a delicate matter. Here”—handing her the letter—“read it and inform yourself. While I shall not try to influence your answer, I wish you to consider that he is a man of unspotted character and irreproachable habits; a man of great talent with the prospect of a brilliant future; and, above all, in love, ardently in love with you and has been for a long time. Think it over well and let us know how you feel.

“Probably you can understand that—it is a great surprise—that now . . .

“Think it over. It is natural, that you should not wish to give an immediate answer; I would not expect it.”

When Carmen was in her room, she did not read the letter, even through curiosity. Why should she? She had been expecting this proposal in one form or another, for many weeks. Now, she would, indeed, need all her wits. She imagined that her enemies would be capable of anything and foresaw difficult days in store for herself. If she could only get word to him! . . . But how, when they would watch her more closely than ever?

And, what if Gerardo, deceived by the cunning of this designing old witch, should have sought forgetfulness in other loves?

The lack of news from the student, naturally, made all terrible things seem possible. Once in a great while, she would get a letter from Moncha, full of excuses about not writing and giving in detail the little happenings which made the tediousness of life in Santiago less unbearable, but, on the one point of most interest to Carmiña, she was silent. Moncha seemed to be forgetting even Casimiro;

the only time she suspected a hint of either of them was in a reference to certain persons amusing themselves by serenading. Gerardo? Casimiro? She could not tell.

And, if he had left Santiago? . . . This was a new source of worry.

But, near or far, her heart tenaciously dictated hope and refused the possibility of permanent separation. That which claimed her attention for the moment was the other; she could not formulate any satisfactory plan of action, so let the time slip by. Many a great general has won a battle by putting it off.

Whenever her uncle or *Maragota* questioned her, she said that she had not yet been able to make up her mind, and, as they seemed to think this indecision natural, she gained another respite.

From time to time, *Maragota* talked to her about Octavio, praising his excellent qualities. She was a mother and her niece could not think it strange that she should be interested in her son, and wished to know her feelings toward him. She was also very fond of Carmiña and the possibility of seeing them happily united forever was a joy to her soul.

Carmen listened to her attentively, with curiosity, but gave no inkling of her own feelings.

Until one day, came another letter in which Señor Valiño respectfully and eloquently pleaded for a categorical answer from the Señorita Castro Retén.

It was no longer possible to evade the question. And what would be gained by putting it off? In a month, or two, or six, the same difficulty would have to be faced, even if the others would grant so much time. She could reply negatively, but, at what cost? They might take measures to compel her.

This made the thought and desire of fleeing uppermost in her mind; to escape from her jailers was the all important problem.

Yes; to get away she was determined.

But the Señorita Castro Retén could not run away like any common woman who might abandon her home and family, to find herself wherever fortune might see fit to

land her. . . . What should she do? . . . How could she free herself from her persecutors?

"Holy Virgin, beloved Mother, help me!" she implored.

And with her nerves at the highest tension, with her will power concentrated on the solution of this difficult question, she stood up and clutched at the air, her arms raised to heaven, as if to grasp the rescuing idea. . . .

* * * * *

That night at supper, Carmiña with more self-assurance than ever before, informed Don Angel, that she had received a personal letter from his *step-son* (?).

"And what is your answer?" impatiently interrogated *Maragota*.

"I have not yet replied. I esteem Octavio, knowing him to be a good man of estimable qualities, and thank him for his offer, with appreciation, [What a good actress the little rascal was! What naturalness and innocence she displayed!] but matrimony is a very serious question which requires thought and advice. Therefore, before giving my answer to Octavio, papa being dead, out of respect and affection for his authority, I wish to talk with friends."

"Very well," agreed Don Angelito snapping his teeth into a cruller.

"Who is there better to consult than yourself?" argued the jealous *Maragota*: "This is a question for one to decide for one's self. You are the one who is going to be married and, as for time to think it over, it seems to me, that you have already taken time enough."

"First, I wish to talk with my uncle, although I know his opinion; and then, with Don Dámaso, my confessor; also, with Don Ventura, who was such a great friend of papa's."

Notwithstanding that these names, particularly the ex-judge's name—Don Ventura was an acknowledged admirer of her son—inspired her with confidence, *Maragota* turned toward Carmiña with alarm, scenting danger like a watchdog.

"Yes, that is all very well, but how can you ask these señores to come out here at this season of the year?"

"Ave María! A poor old man like Don Dámaso! Why, whoever thought of such a thing! We will go to him."

"To Santiago!" exclaimed *Maragota* now thoroughly frightened.

"Why not? Is there anyone or anything to prevent our going to Santiago?"

"Goodness gracious! No, child, there is no one to prevent us, but I was just trying to spare you the pain of going back there without him who is with God."

"Of course, it will be very sad for me, but I cannot help that, and putting it off will not make it any easier. You, surely, do not wish to keep me from ever going back there?"

"Holy Mother! I don't wish anything, but I was thinking that the longer you put it off . . ."

"You do not seem to realize what you are saying," interrupted Carmen pretending to be offended: "You do me a great injustice if you think that I shall ever forget the saint who is in heaven and be able to return without sorrow."

"Why, no, my child! Before God, I did not mean. . . . Why, of course . . ." she stammered in her confusion.

"Then, besides, we will go to Faramello," continued Carmiña dealing the last blow: "One day in Santiago will be sufficient for me to talk with Don Ventura and Don Dámaso and then, we will go out there."

Although *Maragota* made no further opposition she was very much disturbed and, when they were alone, gave it to her "big boob" of a husband who could not see anything apprehensive in the situation, considering the attitude of his niece perfectly natural.

"Well, I can tell you, in your stupidity, you are jeopardizing the future of our son."

"What foolishness! What do you fear may happen in Santiago?"

"That they will meet?"

"Who?"

"Idiot! Whom do you suppose? This cursed Madrileño and Carmen, of course."

"I think, in the short time that we shall be there, you are clever enough to prevent their meeting."

Maragota did everything that she could to delay the departure and, after exhausting all other resources, pretended to be ill.

"I have that terrible pain in my side, which kept me in bed so long last year."

"Why, really? It will be too bad if we have to leave you here," said Carmen, without attaching any particular importance to the case.

She stay here in the country while Carmen went to Santiago! By all the saints! That would be a pretty kettle of fish! Ah, yes; that would just suit you my beauty; you could go when and where you liked and see whom you liked. I should say not! said *Maragota* to herself.

In the afternoon while they were packing their trunks, she tried to sound *Carmaña* and innocently led the conversation to Gerardo. Carmen who had been expecting this thrust, answered very simply:

"It makes no difference to me whether I see him or not, because for me, he has ceased to exist. He has shown too much contempt for me and has committed too many offenses. I can never forgive him. Never mention his name to me again; I beg of you."

"You are right; he has treated you shamefully; but what if, when he hears that we are in town, he should come to call on you?"

"I shall not see him. You may tell him that I will not receive him."

"Woman!"

"I have told you, that he is the same as dead to me. You can see how tranquilly I say it. One permits one's self to be deceived but once in a life time. Let us not speak of him again."

Ay, but the other, her Octavio! There was a gentleman who was a gentleman—so good, so noble, so learned, so gifted with eloquence. She was almost overcome whenever she listened to him, but then, she was only a simple woman.

. . . But, everybody said, he had a brilliant future in store for him. Don Ventura affirmed that when he talked with the deputies, he made a great impression. And Jesusiño Mollido assured her that he would one day be a professor or a representative.

“And I believe it. I am his mother. . . . Even if he didn’t have all these qualities, I can tell you, that for goodness and being in love with you—Holy Virgin!—you could never find his equal. You two will be very happy together. . . . If you should say no, he would die of grief.”

In order that he might not even become ill, she wrote that same night:

“My dear son:—

“Leave all and come to Santiago. Tomorrow, we are going there. Do not worry; everything is all right, for I am here; but come as soon as you can. She was determined to go and we could not dissuade her. She says, before answering you, she wishes to consult with her confessor and Señor Lozano. . . .”

To please Carmen, they left La Coruña at night, which suited *Maragota* exactly, and arrived at Santiago very early in the morning. It was raining. They saw no one.

It was hardly daybreak when Carmen and *Maragota* went to the cathedral. They had to wait a long time in the nave of the Soledad, sitting with a number of women of humble station at the foot of one of the pillars and were just about frozen when Don Dámaso arrived.

He was a pleasant, kindly old man effusive and resolute, always smiling and very talkative. Although his clothes were well worn, he was neat and clean.

“How much you must have suffered, child! I have thought a great deal about you, as I have already written. I, also, felt deeply your father’s death—God keep him in heaven. . . . When one is old, the loss of each friend is a greater sorrow. One becomes more and more lonely. . . . One fears to be left entirely alone. . . . I was very fond of that good man, and he of me. Our friendship was of many years standing. I, who was well acquainted with him, can testify that he was one of the best men who

ever lived—so just. We weep for him through selfishness, but he is much better off, for, I assure you, he is in heaven praying for us. . . .

“The señora, she is your Uncle Angel’s wife? My dear señora, I am pleased to meet you. Remember me to your husband. . . .

“You wish to confess, my child, all the big sack of sins, you are bringing? Very well, you wait till I have despatched these women. The poor have many duties and cannot afford to waste their time. Please wait here. Pardon, but I do not like to have those who are waiting surround the confessional; there are some who have very sharp ears and hear everything, therefore, I oblige everyone to remain out here by this column, and, if I should make an exception in your case, the others would say that I was discriminating. . . . In just a few minutes, I shall be ready for you. . . .”

He opened the confessional and called one after the other of those desiring to confess, getting through with them rapidly.

At last, Carmen’s turn came. It was a great trial to *Maragota* not to be able to go near enough so that she could hear.

Carminña prayed fervently for a moment and then put her sad face up to the grating and shielded it with her veil by holding it on either side against the confessional.

“For God’s sake, Don Dámaso, do not lose sight of that villainous woman! Tell me if she tries to come any nearer.”

“My child!”

She began to weep bitterly.

“For the love of the Holy Virgin, Don Dámaso, for the soul of papa; for my mother’s; for the one you hold most dear, save me! I have no one to help me but you! Save me!”

XVI

And he?

The poor fellow! He came back from the Mariñas thinking that all was lost; that Carmen's love for him was dead; that his future was buried in the grave with it. For a few days, he was almost crazy. He talked of assassinating the Ex-Judge of Órdenes; of killing himself.

When the first storm had subsided sufficiently to allow him to reflect composedly, he asked himself if it were possible, that the building of his happiness erected on such a firm foundation, could be razed by a single squall no matter how severe, and, thinking over the events of his love, was obliged to answer negatively.

No; when Carmiña had sworn to her undying love for him in caressing words, with the true love-light in her eyes, her soul was virgin and she had delivered it to him for eternity. Had she not said: "Although they kill me, I shall love you; although you forget me, I shall love you; although you cease to love me, I shall still love you"? No, a thousand times no. It could not all come to an end like this; surely not. A temporary rupture of longer or shorter duration, it might be; a definite break, never. They had sworn eternal love and, when such oaths are taken from the heart, they are recorded in that mysterious book in which is written the destiny of man.

It was, then, a question of time; of waiting for Carmen's return which seemed to the student to be too long delayed for some unaccountable reason; of finding an occasion to talk with her and convince her of his sincerity.

The cold, disagreeable days dragged on one after another, now, for some incomprehensible cause, filled with optimism and, again, without more sense, with desperation.

When Gerardo talked with the sophisticated Casimiro, the sky of his hopes had to clear somewhat and, at times,

there was even the suspicion of a rosy tint on the horizon. The poet affirmed with a conviction which did the poor boy's heart good, that Carmen was the victim of circumstances like Gerardo, himself, and was "controlled against her will," as the text of Penal Law reads.

"It is logic, Señor Roquer y Paz. You know that I am the first logician of this blessed land and all the surrounding country; the first logician and the first poet. I am a paradoxical andante. Listen, boy: The Señorita Castro Retén, rich and beautiful; *Maragota*, in love with her money and her beauty; the señora mother of *Maragota*, inside the place which her son wishes to conquer, in the position of commander-in-chief—nothing less—and Carmen and you, you and Carmen, two young simpletons easy prey for the old schemer. It is just like the fairy tale: An old witch casts her spell over the princess and, as His Highness, the Prince, is a guileless creature who lets himself be intimidated by the first Portuguese pretending to come forth to battle . . ."

"I will go back to the Outeiro tomorrow!" interrupted Gerardo impatient to unsheathe his sword in defense of the enchanted princess.

"And spill the beans."

"How? I'll just face that old hellion and . . ."

"Not to the point at all. You will have to work in a different way. With persons like this woman, nothing is gained by bluster. You do not understand the Galicians and under-rate them, judging from appearances, but they are very deep. God forbid that you should learn from experience! Unless all signs fail, you have run up against one of the most insidious of the race. They are a subtle people with craftiness born and bred in the bone. They work slowly and underhandedly, but surely; walk erect, when practicable; when not, they crawl; but always forward. They never swerve from their purpose, never become discouraged, never complain, never turn back. They smile constantly—deceitful wretches!—and pursue their object either by the royal highway or the hidden path. At the best, they get into one's coach and ride in luxury, and it seems as if that is what has happened to you. There is

no force to overcome them; not even the sword of Siegfried, the lance of St. George, nor the feet of the Apostle's horse can wound them. They are invulnerable. They can be conquered only by their own weapons—patience, shrewdness and evil intention—and when you have them in hand, a direct blow at the heart and a score of clever shots cleverly directed at the head. With some of them, you have to pile a mountain on top of their graves to keep them from resuscitation. Believe me! Dissimulation, silence, calmness and courage, these are your weapons of offense and defense. Now, leave it to me to dictate what you shall do. Do not make any false movements nor adopt tragic attitudes like that fantastic Augusto Armero.”

Poor Augusto, how he changed when Filo “gave him the mitten”! He who was never very enthusiastic over her—he felt, he ought to have a girl, because “a student without a sweetheart is like a spring without flowers”—fell madly in love with the younger daughter of the Ex-Judge of Órdenes. He spent his days walking up and down the gloomy *calle del Franco*, looking up at Don Ventura's windows with languid eyes and his evenings singing melancholy songs accompanied by Alvaro Soto's sentimental violin and Alejandro Barreiro's guitar, in the most plaintive manner under Filo's balcony; this young lady took pleasure in showing her contempt in proportion to his remorse and affliction.

The officious youth no longer took interest in the affairs of others. Terrible sign! At present, he talked with lachrymose words only of his own great sorrow and the black destiny to which he was condemned. He was elegiac. He recited Dante's desperate verses in Italian and some of Mirabeau's, which he had read on the leaf of an almanac and constantly repeated a phrase he had picked up the summer before at Villagarcia while dancing with a señorita:

“I am very sentimental!”

He was, in fact, the personification of sadness; but did not lose flesh over it; his, was a rosy-cheeked, chubby sadness.

And all on account of that confounded Madeira who did not know how to get drunk like a gentleman, and who,

while his friends were suffering the penalty of his actions, was happily paying court to his own girl who had come to visit some relatives in Santiago.

It is needless to mention that Roquer and Armero had severed all relations with him, more decidedly than the composed Barcala who bore his rupture with Moncha very philosophically.

While his comrades paraded their ill humor through the city and particularly in the streets where *she* lived, Casimiro as happy and care free as ever, thought only of amusing himself. He found another girl, a pretty little seamstress who lived in the "Little Hell" above, on a picturesque corner very well adapted to serenading. Besides, he was having a fabulous streak of luck at games—he played every afternoon in Matía's dirty Billiard Hall where the undergraduates considered it an honor to lose to a law student and a poet and applauded his powerful strokes and great skill, in that dense atmosphere of cheap tobacco smoke and bad smells.

At the University and in the Rúa, they commented on the remarkably tenacious good fortune of Barcala. There were afternoons when he won four or five dollars and almost never less than two.

"You play well, Casimiro!"

"I learned from some fellows at the academy in my town."

He even saved up money—twenty dollars, at least—to go on the trip, carnival week, with the Glee Club; Nietiño was director and Casimiro—in his triple rôle of orator, poet and señor-with-the-big-moustache—general manager. It made the circuit of the provincial cities and country towns roundabout where these concerts were the only entertainments there were to enliven the deadly monotony during the whole year.

Before starting on its tour, the Glee Club gave a farewell concert in the theatre which was crowded as on the best nights of Repolo's Company. It was a brilliant affair; the college boys "kept the ball rolling" between *the acts* with their joking, throwing of hats to the girls in the boxes, to receive the decoration of a flower or a ribbon to

be placed beside the classical ivory spoon—their club pin. Barcala's eloquent and flowery speech replete with redundancy and tautology, dedicated to the Honorary Presidenta, Josefina Rubianes, which made her turn pink to the roots of her glorious blond hair as she sat—the cynosure of all eyes—in the middle of the center box, like a queen surrounded by a court of admiring students, was received with a storm of applause.

“It is true, that we are going away!”—gracefully declaimed Casimiro stepping up to the footlights like a tenor keyed up to concert pitch—“But your remembrance,”—making an elaborate gesture towards the beauties which ornamented the ‘splendid auditorium of the elegant coliseum’—“your beautiful faces will go with us; we shall carry them here”—dramatically striking his chest—“in the *iconostasio*¹ of our hearts and, although far away, we shall have in our homesick ears the delight of a mysterious music, the sweet vague notes of an ineffable aeolian harp in which will sing the soft murmurs of your crystal voices and the golden ring of your joyous laughter. . . .”

All the time that Casimiro was delivering his address, Moncha was carrying on an animated conversation with her friends in the neighboring boxes, Arturo Santaliño, Pedro Seoane and Ramón Sanjurjo, the cream of Compostelan society, who must have been saying very agreeable things to her, for she laughed merrily, to the great annoyance of her señor progenitor who, although he cared nothing for the poet personally, was much disturbed at the lack of respect for the oratory, “the greatest of fine arts.”

But Moncha was in the best of spirits and gave no attention to the reproof of her father nor the members of the audience, who several times demanded silence by imperative hisses. She laughed so hard, that, when the theatre broke into applause at one of the speaker's most eloquent passages in which he referred to the Señorita Rubianes as “the sun who illuminates with the rays of her golden hair the hearts of the happy youths” her innocent

¹ Iconostasio, a picture frame with two doors to open and close. Icons are frequently kept in such a frame.

fan—Moncha's best one—had its ribs broken by a nervous movement of the hilarious young lady.

"Bravo! Bravo! Splendid!" approved Don Ventura.

"Ay, papa!" protested Monchiña: "I do not see how you can like such silly talk."

With the Glee Club, went nearly all of Doña Generosa's guests, except the silent Pulleiro, the *Ostrógoth*, Madeira—the last two kept at home by their respective sweethearts—and Gerardo who did not wish to figure in any more students' rackets. He was not like the turncoat, Augusto, who, when they were having a last rehearsal, felt his love suddenly weaken and before night, obedient to the weather-cock in his head, joined the chorus as leader of the tenors, for which position he was so well fitted with his clear, rich, true voice. They were trying Fárvaro's famous waltz:

"Adiós sad city
With skies of crape."

Then it was amusing to hear the reanimated fellow set forth the joys of the journey in glowing colors to Gerardo, to induce him to go with them: "We shall see slathers of pretty girls; it is such fun to throw our caps at them for decorations. Besides the regular concerts, we serenade the members of the city or town governments and sing in the Casinos; we go from a ball in La Coruña to another at Ferrol; from a luncheon at Betanzos to a banquet in Lugo and from Betanzos's beauties to those of Lugo; from the girls of Orense to those of Vigo . . ." But Señor Roquer y Paz would not be seduced by the enticing picture. He preferred to remain in the boredom of Santiago with the hope of good news which he was impatiently expecting and felt certain must soon arrive. What surprised him was the facility with which the voluble Señor Armero threw off his sorrows and prepared so joyously to take up a life of singing and dancing.

"Did you think, I was going to spend the rest of my life walking through the Franco? No, my boy, no! Variety is the spice of life. No señorita in that street need smile any more for me, however much her father may

be an Ex-Judge of Órdenes. We must live, Gerardiño!”

And he began to dance, with all kinds of antics, that mazurka which Valverde had just written:

“Life is joy!
Joy is life!”

“Let anyone who likes get as rabid as she pleases, Don Gerardo! . . . I would give something to see Señorita Lozano’s face tonight when she hears no more serenading. . . .”

With the departure of the Glee Club, the “House of Troy” remained sad and silent—dead. The only sound to be heard was that of Madeira, occasionally, furiously pounding his tambourine.

He was practicing. He was determined that this time his skillful tambourine playing should not be unappreciated and organized a troop of his own of which he, naturally, was the manager, to shine before his sweetheart and surpass the presumptuous Barcala who could make such flowery speeches.

“Laying aside all theatrical display which means very little,” as he wrote in the notice which he sent to the local press: “these serenaders do not dress in fantastic costumes of cheap velvet, with short breeches and woolen stockings and buckle shoes, like those other fellows who are at present flirting with the beauties of Orense. Madeira’s students, except for their necessary instruments, content themselves with that which dazzled the Portuguese *Senhoritas* two years ago—cloaks thrown over their Sunday suits and three-cornered hats, a small orchestra, a not very well trained chorus and an economical banner of satinet.”

And Samoeiro for director! The *Ostrógoth*, Samoeiro, who, discovering hitherto unsuspected talent of a poetical-musical nature in himself, in a couple of sleepless nights, drew forth from that block which he wears under his greasy mop, the words and music of a waltz which would make Strauss turn green with envy. It was dedicated to Elvirita Briay—better known to the college boys as the Señorita *Simpleton*—and began:

Beautiful garden of flowers,
Look out from your windows, we pray,
For thinking of you at all hours
Are students who sing night and day.

To be sure, neither words nor music were very good, but they made a pleasing harmony and the waltz proved a howling success which was only exceeded by Madeira's pounding of the tambourine in front of the house where his sweetheart was visiting, with his hands, elbows, feet, knees and head.

He was magnificent, dancing and leaping grotesquely—until he was breathless and sweating—in the center of a circle formed by the chorus, which widened at each wonderful figure in order to give the spectators a better view, who with the last forceful note ejaculated by a violent contortion of the tambourine player, saw a shoe come flying at their heads.

"Hurrah for the Famous Company of Serenaders!" shouted a young boy, without doubt, envious of Madeira's glory.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!!" responded the whole sportive concourse.

Then Madeira, while waiting for his shoe which could not be found, balancing himself upon one foot, imitating an annihilating look and making a tribunicial gesture, loftily and eloquently—as he confessed afterward with his habitual modesty—*serenaded* them with these lapideous words:

"The diatribes of the envious rain upon me without wounding me, as the crystal lymph upon the stones of the river."

The crowd recognizing a burlesque on Barcala's phrases, the *speech* was received with a tempest of applause and hurrahs.

"What's the matter with the President of the Famous Serenaders? He's all right!" again yelled the envious boy.

It being impossible to find the lost shoe, the tambourine player was unable to go on and had to take refuge in a

doorway till a pair with elastics, which would cling more tightly, was brought from the boarding house.

Roquer did not witness the triumph of his house companions. He had made up his mind to sacrifice everything, in order to prove his sincerity which he hoped would one day be recognized, and did not set foot into the street; he did not attend the balls at the Casino, the celebrations at the theatre nor the Circo, nor accept any invitations.

Tuesday was the only day Pulleiro could get Gerardo out of bed where he had spent his days smoking and reading, until Doña Generosa begged the medical student to entice his friend into the fresh air.

“He will die of ennui and smoke me out of the house with all his cigars,” she declared.

To the silent Pulleiro—always short of cash and not very long on his sense of humor—these merry-makings had very little attraction, but he had been willing to do anything for Gerardo ever since that day when he came in from the medical school at luncheon time to seek his quotidian broth and found the *Trojans* lined up on either side of his door, with paper caps on their heads, presenting arms with their umbrellas as they marked time to their own version of the royal march.

How could he ever forget it? Inside his room whimsically draped with towels, counterpanes and paper flags, Roquer, Barcala and Manolito, ceremoniously dressed in Prince Alberts, *à la* Don Servando, were awaiting him. Without any explanation, they made him sit down on the bed in front of a mysterious bulk covered with a historic spread embroidered by Doña Generosa; Casimiro made a brief, ludicrous address and Manolito recited a short *medico-legal* poem in very bad measure and then sounded for the second time, the royal march ending with a grand flourish and the dropping of the embroidered spread, when there appeared before the astonished eyes of the medical student a beautiful cabinet with glass door, through which shone a lavish arsenal of surgical instruments; of such a one, in his most optimistic moments, the poor cornetist had never dared to dream.

Then Roquer presented to him very formally, on the

largest platter in the house, an envelope containing the key and a card which Pulleiro could hardly see through the tears in his eyes to read: "To the brave *Panduriño* with the homage of admiration from his friends, Juan and Gerardo Roquer."

Panduriño kissed the card and embraced Gerardo; embraced the rest of the fellows; embraced Doña Generosa; shook hands with the servants who had come to the door to witness the presentation; since that memorable day, he had been devoted to this friend who had made him so happy.

"It is not only the gift which I value and have so greatly desired, Roquer; I prize the act and the spirit that prompted it," said the cornetist with the tears streaming down his cheeks.

It will, then, be well understood that not only into the streets on Tuesday of the carnival, but into the infernal regions in summer time, if it were for the benefit of Gerardo, would Pulleiro gladly go.

At last, Gerardo was obliged to accede to the arguments of the future physician and, once out of doors, moved by curiosity, went to the Rúa to see the battle of almonds which, according to a barbarous custom, was waged on the third day from the porticos and balconies, with great detriment to glass, danger to eyes and satisfaction to the rabble of street urchins who spend the afternoon hunting for and disputing over the palatable projectiles.

Toward night, during the thickest of the fight, after filling his pockets with sugared almonds at Blanco's, Gerardo took *Panduriño* to the *Rua Nueva* [The New Boulevard] and pelted the windows of Angelito Retén's house.

All to no purpose; there was no sign of life within.

A pack of masked gamins with a mess of rags for costumes, came along and wished to do battle for the sweet ammunition. Gerardo worked himself into high spirits throwing it at them. Everyone went straight to the heart of the enemy although he threw at random.

"It is a long time since I have felt so light-hearted," he said to Pulleiro as he withdrew victorious.

But cheerfulness is of short duration in a sad heart.

The ephemeral satisfaction of that afternoon soon turned to bitterness. His uneasiness increased as the dull days of that endless Lent passed tiresomely one after another. What had become of Carmen? Why did she not return to Santiago? This lack of news drove Gerardo back into his former state of desperation.

Even Barcala could give no encouragement nor did he know what to advise and the Madrileño seriously contemplated setting out for the Outeiro to throttle that old witch, when early one morning, Doña Generosa burst into his room and awakened him.

“Señorito Roquer! Don Gerardo! Wake up, wake up! I have some good news for you.”

“What is the matter? What time is it?” he answered sitting up in bed, while Doña Generosa, stumbling over the furniture, hurried across the room to open the shutters and let in the pale light of that rainy morning.

“I tell you, I have good news for you.”

“What is it? Tell it, tell it!”

“She is in Santiago.”

“Who?”

“The Señorita Carmen. I have just seen her in the cathedral with that old she-devil of an aunt of hers.”

The student wished further particulars, but all that Doña Generosa could tell him was that, just before early mass, she had seen the Señorita Castro leave a confessional in the nave of the Soledad and join *Maragota* who was waiting for her at the foot of one of the columns.

“I don’t see why some persons are not struck by lightning from heaven as soon as they go into a church,” proffered the good señora.

According to Doña Generosa, Señorita Castro must have gone to communion, because, after mass, when she came back to pray to the Virgin, she saw *Maragota* leaving the confessional and noticed that she went into several of the chapels, evidently hunting for her niece.

The student jumped into his clothes and shot out of the house in the direction of the cathedral. He hunted all over the church going into the chapels several times and

looking into every corner, but, nowhere did he find that which he was seeking.

Later, on his way to the international law class, Augusto came running up panting for breath.

“Cheer up, old man! I have some good news! Wonderful news!”

“Yes, I know it. Carmen is in Santiago.”

“Why! How did you hear of it?” asked the newsy Compostelan very much disappointed not to be the first to give the information. “I am surprised that anyone could have known it before I did, because it was only this morning that Carmen went into . . .”

“The cathedral with her darned old aunt. I know all about it.”

“It can’t be, because it was just a few minutes ago and I ran as fast as I could to tell you; I didn’t meet anybody.”

“You see that I did, just the same.”

“How?”

“Doña Generosa who is an earlier bird than you saw them in church before mass.”

“Doña Generosa better be in her kitchen where she belongs.”

“Do not be angry at her, Augustiño. Forgive the poor woman.”

“And after the way I ran! . . . I left the table without eating my breakfast as soon as my mother told me that she had seen Carmen. . . .”

Gerardo wished to call at the house at once, but listening to the prudent advice of Barcala, abstained.

“It would be useless. Do not let them see you. Heed me and do not even walk through their street. Make the old aunt think that you are indifferent.”

Deeming that counsel wise, he did not try to call on Carmen, but it was impossible to curb his feelings to the extent of not making an attempt to see her. He walked through the Senra and the Rúa time and time again. The Castro house still remained closed and silent. At the Retén home, the street door being open was the only

indication of the return of its occupants. Don Angelito did not make his appearance at the Casino nor on the street. The Liberty which always noted the comings and goings of prominent families, said nothing about the Reténs.

"They seem to be hiding, Casimiro."

"No doubt about it, Gerardo."

Three days afterward, Augusto sprang another one.

"Here is something, you don't know!" And he eyed Gerardo mysteriously, delighting in the impatience he was causing, weighing the importance of his news and dealing out his words in proportion: "This morning, arrived from Madrid, leaving his studies. . . ."

"*Maragota?*"

"Yes, *Maragota*; but how did you know? Who told you? They tell you everything before I get a chance!"

"You, yourself, are telling me. . . . Come, hurry up!"

"Very well; that is as it should be. . . ."

"Go on, go on; don't keep me on pins and needles."

"That is all I know. . . . He came this morning on the diligence from Curtis. No one was there to meet him and he went straight to his house as if he didn't want anyone to see him."

What did this inopportune return of *Maragota* mean? Why had he come? Surely, things were taking on an ominous aspect. Now more than ever, it was necessary to be on the alert.

Contrary to Casimiro's judgment, Gerardo wrote a passionate letter and tried to bribe one of the Retén servants to deliver it, but she inflexibly refused. He posted it; that night, it was given back to him by that same maid with this message:

"The señorita does not care to be troubled; she does not wish to know anything more about you."

The student attempted to loosen the domestic's tongue with a bank note—not knowing that paper money had little or no value in the eyes of the people in this part of the country where they seldom see it—but the woman looked at it disdainfully and walked into the house.

"We shall have to enlist Rafael," was Barcala's decree: "Let's go over to the Siglo."

On entering the restaurant, he made a sign to the astute waiter.

"We need your help, Rafaeliño."

"If it isn't money," answered the wary one.

"Yes, it is money—money for you."

"Ah, that's different! Let it come!"

"It is a question of delivering a letter," interposed Gerardo impatiently. "No," corrected Casimiro: "the important thing is to find out what is going on in *Maragota's* house."

In few words, they explained the case.

"Young or old, they must have a maid; leave it to me to *get round* her. Don't come to the restaurant for a few days—not till I send for you."

"Nonsense, Rafaeliño! Who is going to suspect me?"

"Ay, it will be hard on you, Señor Barcala; but he who wants something . . . Then you must advance me some money Señor Barcala."

"That is my affair," promptly replied Gerardo.

"Ay, Don Gerardo, then you will be willing to pay me for my time that I lose at the restaurant and something more besides?"

"Of course."

"Oh, you are a regular gold mine, señor, but I won't impose on you, you know. . . . You better go along now, for people are beginning to come in. When there is any news, I will come over to the boarding house."

In two days, the Retén house was entirely closed again. Rafael said that they had gone to Faramello.

"That proves that they are trying to hide and avoid people," grumbled Gerardo.

"Everything points that way," corroborated Casimiro.

"I think so too," agreed Rafael: "From the little I have been able to find out, I should say that they keep the señorita shut up and don't even let her speak to the servants."

Their youthful imaginations commenced to work; the Madrileño and his friend pictured to themselves the tortures which her jailers were inflicting on the unhappy Carmiña to compel her to forget a fine lad like Gerardo

and marry that boasting babbler of a *Maragota*. Armero painted even more highly colored scenes than they. He saw her in a gloomy dungeon, the central figure of bloody episodes.

"Oh, shut up with such idiotic talk!" commanded Barcala.

"In any case, I must put an end to this," decided Gerardo.

Evidently, if only for humanitarian reasons; but how? How? By appealing to the law. Were they not lawyers?—in embryo. They surely would be able to find some law to put an end to such a horror.

Doña Generosa's house was turned topsy-turvy in their search for a law to fit the case; they went through one code after another; perused miles of discussions and commentaries without finding the exact circumstances of the Señorita Castro and her unfortunate lover and, at last, had to acknowledge that they were conquered.

"It isn't possible," protested the Madrileño: "there must be something somewhere."

"Perhaps! But, if we can't find it?"

"Then, what is the good of all our study of the law?"

"That was just what I, myself, was thinking, boy," responded Casimiro disconsolately.

It was true. All of Casás's *excellents*, Boullosa's *goods*, Barcala's prizes in literature and political economy, Samoeiro's *commendations* and Pitouto's *suspensions* were on the same footing. They counted for nothing in time of need.

"We are shining lights, the whole bunch of us."

It was Madeira, who up to that time had said nothing, that offered the solution.

"Bosh! You are uselessly wearing out the few brains you possess. You say that the señorita is sequestered and that they have taken her to the country the better to coerce her? Well then, blockheads, we have only to betake ourselves to Faramello, enter the house—if not one way, another—beat up the whole push of felonious highwaymen who guard her, take possession of Gerardo's girl and bring her safe, sound and happy to Santiago. So much talk,

so much book business amounts to less than Samoeiro's feather bed! I will go with Roquer or alone and rescue the girl," he gallantly wound up.

The Madrileño was deeply moved and rushed to embrace him.

"You are right! Come on!"

"One moment," said the prudent *Ulysses* Barcala: "After we have rescued the señorita, what shall we do with her? I suppose that we could not very well bring her here to the house. . . ."

"That's so. What shall we do with her?"

"Nothing simpler!" spoke up the romantic Armero, finding the plan in his novelesque erudition: "We will have a priest in waiting at a nearby church and carry her there as soon as we have delivered her from her persecutors; they will be married and we will offer our congratulations to the pair and as many curses to *Maragota* and his old sow and send them off with flying colors."

"And where are we going to find a priest who will do it?"

"I'll go get Minguiños. He's just the one," answered Casimiro: "Who knows where he lives?"

"What difference does it make? Wasn't Don Sabino buried today?"

"That's so. We shall find him at the Argallante Tavern tonight."

Minguiños was a fat, happy creature of the Rabelais type, who looked a good subject for apoplexy. Eating was his favorite diversion. He had a cavernous voice which earned him a living as subchanter at funerals. For Minguiños, the days were divided into two classes; dark days—days on which there was no one to bury and he was reduced to everyday pottage—and happy days—those on which he had a well paid funeral and could afford to go to the tavern and have a good mess of fish with other things.

"Caught a fish, Minguiños?" the students used to call out to him when they saw him hurrying in the direction of the tavern with his red leather purse hanging from his arm.

"That I have!" he would reply, his whole face lighting up.

No one could remember an interment, funeral or religious function which Minguíños did not solemnize by regaling himself that same night at the Argallante Tavern with a couple of portions—when it was not three—of that rich dish of hake and green peas, which the tavernkeeper's wife knew so well how to prepare. Fish and peas was Minguíños's vice—hake, cuttle-fish, sardines with *cache-liños*, cutlets, *lacón* with *grelos*, all washed down with good white wine from the Rivero or the red of Castile, topped off with a little rum to aid digestion. Minguíños was a happy man. He had but one enemy, the good health with which the people of the city were blessed.

"It certainly is indecent of them. With these narrow streets which have been proved very detrimental to health; with houses lacking modern hygienic conveniences; without a proper sewerage system and with all the rain we have—why, the mortality record is frightful! Nobody ever dies. I am the statistician," joked the good man.

"Eh? Yes, some of the poor people drop off, but they have no interest for the statistician. The others, the rich, are the ones who are so disgustingly healthy; they are proof against an epidemic, even.

"How many times a month do I come here, Argallante? Eight, ten—at the most, twelve. It's an abomination, man! They are all dark days. Bring along a mug of that Rivero, God bless it and bless us all, amen. . . . What brings you here, student?" he questioned Barcala, who had been listening to him with curiosity.

"I wish to speak to you, Minguíños."

"You will have to excuse me while I have a piece of fish in front of me. Although they called to make me canon, I wouldn't leave the table."

"That doesn't matter; we can talk while you are eating your supper."

"It won't be on a disagreeable subject; eh? Because it is bad for the digestion."

"Don't worry; it is nothing bad, but something good."

"Very well, let's hear it then."

The student prepared him well. "It will mean a colossal fish for you—as big as a shark—bigger—as big as a whale—a year of hake and peas."

"With sometimes a stuffed capon or an *empanada* of lampreys?" inquired the priest smiling through his greasy beard, his eyes shining with gluttony.

"All that and some little butter cakes from Belvís for dessert."

"As you are so generous, you might as well throw in a few little boxes of quince jelly and pear butter, the rich kind that Don Hilarion sells. Bread spread with jelly after a good dinner makes an excellent dessert."

"Not little boxes, but big ones."

"Ask anything you like, man! Ask anything you like and don't keep me on tenterhooks any longer," begged Minguíños impatient and greedy.

"It is very simple. It is only a question of marrying a young couple whose families are opposed to the wedding. The fellow is very rich and will pay well the priest who performs the ceremony, so I thought of you."

"Don't say any more, man, spare me," said Minguíños disconsolately: "for I cannot serve your purpose. I am terribly sorry, I can tell you. You just whetted my appetite. . . . Give me another portion, Argallante. Marriages to be legal have to be performed in the parish of the contracting couple."

Minguíños counseled a surprise ceremony. "Let them kneel before the priest in their own parish just as he is going to pronounce the benediction in the mass, take hold of each other by their right hands, without gloves, eh? and say at the right moment: 'We take each other for man and wife.' The priest blesses them and *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum*. Good luck to you and may they be well married in the sight of God."

"Are you sure that such a ceremony would be valid? You ought to know."

"Yes, of course; perfectly valid. You read of them in the paper; they frequently take place in Madrid."

This advice just suited Gerardo. The next night, they would rescue Carmiña from the persecutors who held her

in captivity and, the following morning, they would go before the priest in the Pilar and that would be the end of it.

His friends offered to accompany him on this risky expedition. He could not go alone. The best of the Trojans would go with him—Barcala, Pulleiro, Madeira, Marceliño, Manolito and Augusto would join them. Gerardo could not express his gratefulness for this proof of friendship.

“But I do not wish you to compromise yourselves for my sake. You must take into consideration, that it is a very serious affair and will be attended by grave consequences.”

“What is the use of having friends if they don’t stand by you in time of need. You could not fight this battle by yourself. You would be easy game for her jailers to hunt on those lonely roads—just you and she together.”

When Samoeiro heard of the project through an indiscretion of the talkative Augusto, he was offended that they had not counted on him and announced his resolute intention of adding his valorous person to the compromising expedition.

“Friendship and comradeship before all and above everything! For friendship, I would go wherever you might lead, my dear Gerardo.”

“Samoeiro,” said solemnly Casimiro: “for all your greasy hair, your spotted clothes, your flute, your unpublished verses and your inspired music, unknown Wagner, you are a man. Put it there! The first one who calls you *Ostrógoth* or steals your *empanadas*, I will knock off his block.”

In the afternoon, a meeting was held in Gerardo’s room to make plans for the expedition to Faramello that night. Pulleiro and Marceliño would go out, as if to take a walk, about dark in the capacity of explorers; the rest were to leave the house one by one in a casual manner and start out in different directions, meeting at the Rocha Bridge at eleven, where a coach procured by Samoeiro—he being the least suspicious character—would be waiting.

They were all proud of the part they were to play in the operation and each one showed the arms, he was carry-

ing to defend himself. The arsenal ranged from revolvers to blackjacks and razors. From the greatest to the least, each felt himself to be the hero of a novel.

The Señor Armero had never been so happy in his life. He had possessed himself of one of his father's *roten's* and strutted up and down the room in a killing manner, like a true musketeer, muffled in his cape with the end of the stick showing below like the scabbard of a sword.

"We are mediæval knights to the rescue; Leonor languishes in prison and Manrique with his friends go forth to deliver her. Beware, he who would oppose!" and he brandished his stick, dealing blows at the four winds to the great danger of the assembled company and the lamp on the table, which had been vitiating the atmosphere since mid-afternoon. "Villains, avaunt! Make way for justice! Love conquers! For God, the King and our lady! Die, perfidious *Maragota!*"

"Augusto!" cried Barcala. "Sit down and shut up or we'll throw you out!"

"Aw, you fellows haven't a spark of poetry in your souls!" exclaimed Augusto returning his *sword* to its scabbard.

Everything was planned and each was ready to carry out his part. Marceliño and Pulleiro would start in another quarter of an hour—when Rafael came in with the astounding news:

"Señorita Castro is not with the *Maragotas*. She did not go to Faramello. She has not been in her uncle's family for days."

"Well what do you think of that! Since when? Where is she?"

"I don't know, but she isn't with her relatives and they are ripping. Mother and son are all the time whispering; the old *Maragota* is so furious with her husband, that she can't hide her feelings even before the servants, although she doesn't want them to know what has happened. She has threatened them all with being discharged if they speak to Señor Roquer or anyone who comes on his part."

"Well then, how did you find out this?"

"I didn't go on your part; and besides, I didn't talk to any of the girls of the house; I quizzed the laundress who is a friend of the cook."

"So they haven't sequestered the señorita after all?" sighed the disappointed Armero.

"No, señor; I have positive proof that they are very much put about at what has happened. There is no doubt whatsoever, that she left the house against their wishes."

"Can she have gone back to the Outeiro?" queried Gerardo.

Roquer, Barcala and Madeira started for the Mariñas on the very next trip of the Carrilana. All to no purpose; the Señorita Carmen had not been there since she left with Don Angelito and his wife.

Tona related to the Madrileño the conversation which she had had in the little church of Tatín with the Señorita Castro. From one point of view, it made him very happy, but, on the other hand, he was more worried than ever.

Gerardo and his friends pulled every string to get news of Carmen without discovering her whereabouts. Elvirita Briay assured Samoeiro that neither she nor the Lozano girls had heard from her and, they never suspected that she had come back to Compostela.

Driven to desperation, Gerardo went to Don Angelito's house as soon as the family returned from Faramello and insisted upon knowing what had become of Carmen, but Maragota's husband refused to give the information.

"What right have you to make so bold as to come to question me?" he asked the student.

"The right of a fiancé, which seems to me quite sufficient."

Señor Retén would not admit the validity of the title.

"I learn from my niece, that she has broken the engagement; therefore, I am under no obligations to give you any explanations concerning the affairs of my ward."

This was said coldly, disdainfully, with a visible desire to terminate the interview. The Madrileño was not even invited to sit down. He left without further words.

However much Gerardo racked his brains, he could not decide whether to lament or rejoice over the mysterious

disappearance of Carmiña. It might be possible, that she had left of her own accord, but, where had she gone? Why did she not write to him? . . . What if, after all, they had imprisoned her?

He tried to find *Maragota*, with the amiable intentions which may be supposed, but *Maragota* avoided him. He was not to be seen anywhere. It was as if the earth had opened and swallowed him. He wrote a letter full of improprieties, challenging him. *Maragota* replied in a couple of lines without signature, saying that if he received another, he would have recourse to the law. That same day, the Retén house was again closed. The inhabitants had silently departed as if they feared something.

The students thought of consulting a judge, a native of Savilla, a very agreeable señor who spent his days abominating litigations and his evenings playing billiards at the Casino.

Augusto offered to make this diplomatic exploration and let himself be beaten three straight games of billiards in the cause, but came off the winner of the knowledge, that, while they were deficient in positive facts, there was no case for action.

“What good are all these codes, anyway?” he blurted at the friendly judge.

“To give opportunity to lawyers to plead cases. Do you think that is nothing?” laughed his sympathetic opponent.

“I made a great mistake”; groaned Gerardo on finding that this last resource had failed. “I should have sprung at his throat and strangled the *Maragota*’s old husband till I squeezed the truth or the life out of him—or both—when I had the chance.”

And he shook his powerless fists at the four points of the compass.

XVII

It was raining that morning as if water had never before fallen from the skies over Santiago and the clouds were in a hurry to cancel their debt to Compostela.

Gerardo, whom Casimiro, to keep from solitude,

“Mother of melancholy,”

had obliged to attend class, was just entering Angelito Pintos's, with the air of sad resignation, when somebody seized him by the arm. It was Pulleiro.

“Come with me!” he said imperatively and mysteriously pulling him outside the University.

“It must be something important to make you skip classes, you who never take a cut,” commented Gerardo obeying *Panduriño*: “What has happened?”

“Nothing, to me; you are the one whom it concerns and, I can tell you, it is something important,” corroborated the embryonic physician holding up the Madrileño, notwithstanding the rain, at the head of the University steps and letting his words fall one by one to whet the impatience of his friend: “Listen, Señor, Don Gerardo: what will your excellency give me for a piece of good news, a magnificent piece of good news, a stupendous piece of good news?”

“Adolfo!” cried Gerardo all of a tremble clutching his friend's hands, without letting him finish: “You know where she is!”

“Yes, I have seen her!”

“Where? Where?”

“And what is more, I have spoken to her. . . . But, come on, let's walk towards Fonseca, for it is almost time for hygiene class.”

“But, hurry up! Tell me! Don't keep me in suspense any longer. Where is she?”

“In the Convent of the Purísima.”

"What an idiot I have been!" he exclaimed striking his forehead such a blow that he knocked off his hat: "Imbecile! Stupid! Fool! Why, she told me that she thought of going there. Why didn't I think of that? But, tell me, tell me!"

"You will see. . . ."

"How is she? What is she doing? Is she sad? Did she ask for me? Did she send me any message?"

"Calm yourself, whirlwind; keep still a minute and you shall hear everything."

"She is just boarding there; isn't she?"

"Probably, because she isn't dressed like the sisters."

"And what did she say to you? And what did you say to her? Finish!"

"Let me begin first!"

"Yes, yes. But, go on!"

"You must walk along towards Fonseca, I must not miss my hygiene."

"Who can think of classes or books on such a solemn occasion as this? Where is the sun that he does not come out to celebrate?"

"Are you ever going to let me speak?"

"I'm mum. . . . But tell me every single thing without leaving out the most trivial detail."

"Very well. This morning, when I came out of clinic, Don Timoteo—you know, I am his assistant—said to me: 'We have a little operation at the Convent of the Purísima. Nothing of any great importance.' I took my instruments and went to the Convent accompanied by my friend, Rafaelito Martínez Uzal, to wait for Timoteo. When he arrived, we knocked. A thick, feminine voice spoke to us through the little peep-hole: 'Blessed and praised be the Holy Sacrament . . .' Then she recognized Don Timoteo and opened the door."

"Adolfo, look out or I will strangle you."

"You told me not to omit a single detail."

"Well, I tell you now to omit them all and come to the point. Where did you meet her?"

"In the patient's room; the patient is also a boarder. I just put my instruments down on the table which was al-

most covered with saints and burning lamps and, on turning round, I saw your fiancée with a señora and two nuns standing by the bedside, trying to encourage the sick one. She was already half dead with fear and begged Carmen to remain with her during the operation; but, as soon as we applied the æther cone and Timoteo took up the bistoury, your fiancée turned pale, began to tremble and took refuge behind the curtain in the window. . . . When we had finished, I went to speak to her. 'Don't you remember me? I am Pulleiro'—I said to her—'Gerardo's friend whom he presented to you at the romería of Bergondo; *Panduriño*, the cornetist.' Her face lighted up immediately, but she held herself in suspense as if she did not dare to question me or was waiting for me to tell her what, without doubt, she wanted to know. Of course, I told her. And then? 'How happy Gerardo will be when I tell him, that you are here and, that I have spoken to you.' 'Really?' she asked, opening her eyes very wide, showing great interest and emotion. Yes, indeed, she did, boy. 'He was about crazy when he could not find out where you were; in fact, we all were. Only a few nights ago, thinking that they had confined you at Faramello, we were getting ready to rescue you . . .' She smiled, but we could not talk any more, because the nun who had stayed to get us anything which might be required, came over to the window."

"And didn't she say anything about me?"

"Didn't I tell you that the nun interrupted our conversation?"

"Do you have to go back to the convent today?"

"Yes, this afternoon, with Don Timoteo."

"Not before?"

"No. It was not a serious operation. If it were not for the age of the patient and the ether, we should not go again till tomorrow."

"Take me with you."

"That would be impossible! I would like to; but what would Don Timoteo say? How could we explain to him?"

"Tell him, that I am a relative of the patient."

"And the nuns would give me the lie."

"Say that I am a classmate."

"Whom Don Timoteo doesn't recognize? Stupid! The only thing, you can do is to send all the messages you like to your fiancée; or, I will carry a letter."

"No, I must see her; I must talk to her, today, this very day. Come along, Pulleiro, be good; let us go to the convent."

"Oh, no! We cannot do it; believe me. You surely understand that if I refuse you when I am so anxious to help, it is because you ask the impossible. Now, don't be discouraged; calm down and have a little patience. Write her a letter and she will answer telling you how a meeting can be arranged."

He argued for a while, but then, seeing that he could not persuade *Panduriño*, the *Madrileño* acquiesced.

"Very well, as you will not give in, I will go to the house at once and write the letter."

They separated. Pulleiro went down the hill to the Fonseca and Gerardo hurried through the Preguntoiro to "The House of Troy." He ran up the stairs two at a time and did not stop till he reached Pulleiro's room; there, he grabbed a white linen coat that was hanging on the wall and, as he could not find the key to the case of instruments, broke the glass and took out a quantity at random, which he wrapped up in the coat and started on the run for the convent.

"I am Don Timoteo's assistant whom he has sent to see the patient," he said to the nun who spoke through the little window in the door.

"You have never been here before," objected the sister.

"No, señora. I was in the hospital making a visit with Don Maximino and when Don Timoteo arrived, he told me to come here and stay till my classmate, Pulleiro—the tall man with the big moustache, who was here this morning—came."

He heard a whispering behind the door.

"Don Timoteo did not say anything about sending anyone when he bade us good bye till this afternoon," said another voice: "The operation was very successful."

"Yes, he told me so, too," answered the pretending

student: "but he said that on account of her age, there ought to be a medical attendant to see that she comes out of the ether all right and guard against—against—etheritis or ostrogothometitis which might prove very dangerous to a person as old as she who does not have proper attention immediately. Now, if you do not wish to admit me to care for the patient, we shall not be responsible, for we have tried to do our duty."

His reasons convinced the sisters. After a minute or two, which seemed an age to our impatient friend, he was allowed to enter and the older nun conducted him through a lonely, silent cloister surrounding a cheerless garden; took him up a wide staircase, spotlessly clean, the head of which was at the end of a long corridor; on the right and left were doors with a basin of holy water beside each, a crucifix over the lintel and a number on the panel. These, evidently, were the quarters of the boarders.

Gerardo's heart never beat more violently. Behind one of these doors, was his dearly beloved. Which? He did not dare to question the nun, so he began to cough violently in the hope of being heard by one who, perhaps, was thinking of him as far away, never dreaming of the possibility of his close proximity.

"What a bad cold you have," sympathized the sister: "Almost everybody has one this damp weather."

"No, I haven't a cold," spoke up the student as if he were trying to make a deaf person hear: "It is a nervous cough."

"My poor young man! Have you tried the herb tea which Mother Sor María makes? I will bring a little, and you see how soothing it is."

"Do not bother, sister; for this cough there is but one remedy."

In the sick-room, another sister was sitting in a low chair at the foot of the bed reading a prayer book. The patient was still under the influence of the ether.

"She has not moved," said the nun: "but, she moans occasionally."

Gerardo pretended to feel her pulse and reassured the nuns.

"If you have anything to do, you need not remain here," he said, putting on Pulleiro's white frock and spreading out his instruments as if he were about to perform another operation on the poor creature: "I will watch over her and take care of her till my classmate or Don Timoteo arrives. At present, she is doing very well; if there is any change, I will call you."

"You have only to pull this bell cord and we shall come immediately. . . . Let us go to luncheon, Sister San Millán."

They went out and closed the door.

Gerardo opened the transom and coughed and coughed till he fairly hurt his lungs without anyone coming to his rescue. He peeked out; all the doors were closed.

She is probably in the refectory—he said to himself as the savory odor of well seasoned broth penetrated his nostrils reminding him, that he had not had his daily portion.

But who thinks of such prosaic things with the heart overflowing with hope and happiness? He smiled as he pictured the expression on Carmen's face when she should see him here with this frock. . . . What should he do if the poor woman came to before the time? He went to the door and coughed again with no result; then he looked out of the window which faced an extensive garden from which the nuns who usually walked there reading their books of meditations or, perhaps, letting their melancholy thoughts wander over the treetops and over the wall or to the very clouds—God knows where—were excluded by the rain.

All of a sudden, he heard behind him some terrible screams; it was the patient coming out of the ether.

"The devil!" He had not counted on that.

The sufferer increased her cries and began to toss about the bed. The Madrileño had not an idea what to do. Sister San Millán came in and he wished that the earth would open and swallow him.

"What is the matter with her?" asked the nun approaching the bedside: "It is the effect of the ether; I suppose?"

"Yes, yes. It is the ether. They usually act that way when they are coming out."

"I have heard that some have a fit of crying."

"Oh, yes. Some cry and some laugh."

"Aren't you going to give her something?"

"Yes, yes, of course!" And—completely losing his head—he grabbed one of the instruments from the table and started towards the bed; the door opened and Pulleiro out of breath, sopping wet, covered with mud, his umbrella draining off more water than a gargoyle, entered. Notwithstanding the circumstances, he could not suppress a smile at the sight of his friend. He took in the situation and asked the sister to bring a cup of the famous herb tea infused by Mother Sor María.

"A nice chase you have led me! But, fortunately, I arrived in time. It was a difficult case; eh, classmate? I see you are about to apply the forceps. Are you crazy? I came flying, without any luncheon—My, but I'm hungry!—for when I got home and found the glass of the case broken, I knew well enough what you were up to. . . . You didn't bring any instruments; did you? Goodness! You have brought twice as many as we did this morning. . . . What has this poor señora suffered? . . . Here, pick up your things and get out."

"No, señor! I do not leave this place till I have seen Carmen and talked with her."

"But, for heaven's sake! What are we going to say to Don Timoteo?"

"Anything you like, but I am not going to go without speaking to Carmiña."

Pulleiro could do nothing with him. The nun brought the tea and he moistened the patient's lips.

"How is she getting along?" inquired the sister.

"Very well."

"Do you think, she will live?"

"Without any doubt whatsoever."

"Praised be the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. The Good Lord has answered our prayers. We all love Doña Rosalía, she is so good—a perfect saint."

Their conversation was interrupted by the sound of a

bell—one of those peculiar to convents with a crystal ring—melancholy, infantile, ineffable . . .

“They are ringing for service. As you are here, I will join the chorus. If you wish anything, pull the bell cord. Do not go out without calling.”

“Not even into the corridor?”

“This isn’t the nuns’ quarters; but, for all that, you should not go through it alone. The señoras have all gone to their rooms now. In this weather, it is not inviting to walk in the garden nor even in the cloister.”

“It is a long service?”

“Rather, about an hour; I will come back once in a while to see if you need anything.”

Roquer listened at the door for a long time. He could not hear a sound—it was the silence of peace which reigns in convents removed from the noise of the world—only, now and then, the tinkling of a bell inviting to prayer.

“I can’t stand it any longer,” he said opening the door.

“What are you going to do?” asked Pulleiro detaining him.

“Hunt for her!”

“How?”

“Rap on all the doors till I come to hers.”

“Very well, and arouse the whole convent. That would make a nice mess. They would throw us out and God only knows what would happen to us afterward. I shall never dare to face Don Timoteo again.”

“You devise a plan, then, because, I shall not leave this place until I have seen her and spoken to her, come what may.”

“I do not know. . . . I am so afraid, that I have not an idea in my head. I am not used to such things. . . .”

“Nor I! Do you think that I have spent my life assailing convents? . . . An idea, señor, an idea!” . . . demanded the Madrileño pacing the floor nervously. Suddenly, he stopped, clapped his hand to his head and joyously exclaimed: “I have it! I know what I will do! I will go and look out of that window at the end of the corridor and you come to the door and call me by my

name, very loudly, as if you needed me immediately. You understand?"

He went to the end of the hall way.

"Roquer! Gerardo!" called Pulleiro; but, not being master of himself, he did not speak half loudly enough to suit that young man.

"What do you want, Pulleiro?" roared he from the window.

"Come, Roquer! I want you to help me!"

"I am coming, Pulleiro, I am coming!" he cried slowly walking along the passage way: "I swear to you on the word of Gerardo Roquer!" . . .

Then one of the doors opened noiselessly and Carmiña appeared dressed in black, looking pale and sad, but she smiled on seeing the student and looked at him with happy surprise for a second, and then:

"Gerardo!" stretching out her hands towards him.

"Carmiña!" stammered the youth no less moved, pressing her hands passionately and on the point of falling onto his knees. "I am the same! I have always been true to you!"

"You do not know what I have suffered!" whispered Carmen.

The girl's beautiful eyes filled with tears. Gerardo wished to talk to her, but she imposed silence.

"Go, and I will come in a minute," she said indicating the sick-chamber.

Gerardo obeyed. She went back to her room and knelt before the Virgin of Carmen whom she had on the table between the photographs of her parents.

"Holy Virgin! Mother mine!" she prayed and gave thanks, weeping with joy.

Presently, she went into Doña Rosalía's room accompanied by a little old lady.

"She is as deaf as a post," said Carmen when Gerardo looked at her.

"Pulleiro, you explain the whole operation to this señora without leaving out any details, as you so well know how to do," ordered Gerardo.

While the lovers were talking, the good *Panduriño*,

without neglecting the patient, described to the deaf woman with many exaggerations and expressive illustrations—taking up one instrument after another—a fantastic and complicated operation which the poor señora followed attentively with manifestations of horror and fear.

“I, too, have suffered, Carmiña—tortures!” said the student to his fiancée: “Now that I am with you again, I wonder if it may be a dream. I thought you were lost to me forever.”

“Whatever may have been your grief, it could not have equaled mine,” she answered sadly: “because you did not mourn over any infidelity, while I . . .”

“No, Carmen! No, Carmiña, a thousand times no! By God, by the Virgin, by my saintly mother in heaven, I swear to you over and over, that I have nothing with which to reproach myself! Believe me!”

“Yes; I believe you! I wish to believe you; I must believe you. . . . But, what about that scandal with the woman from Madrid? . . .”

“Nothing, absolutely nothing! I will tell you all about it, the first opportunity, I have. It was a miserable invention by a scoundrel who greatly enlarged upon and exploited an innocent little happening, on purpose to separate us. Believe me, dearest! Honestly, I have a perfectly clear conscience. I swear it!”

“Do not swear any more; I believe. . . . And even if I did not, I would forgive you, for your love is my life! I have nothing else in the world! . . . And I believe in it; yes, I believe in it. This confidence which has returned to me, through a miracle of the Blessed Virgin, when I was most desperate, has been my salvation.”

Interrupting each other in a disconnected, rapid, nervous dialogue, expecting every moment, that some one would come to put an end to it, they related as best they could, their respective stories.

“I was so glad when I caught sight of Doña Generosa in the cathedral and knew that she had seen me!” concluded Carmen. “But I did not dare to stop to speak to her for fear that the *Maragota* would spy us talking together. I said to myself—Now Gerardo will know that I

am in Santiago and, if he loves me, he will hunt for me. And I hurried away to get to the convent while *Maragota* was at the confessional. What kept you so long? Why didn't you hunt for me before?"

"Hunt for you? Why, I hunted everywhere. I even went to your uncle. We were just on the point of assaulting the house at Faramello . . ."

At this, Carmen laughed heartily.

"How long it is since I have laughed! Now, with God's help, they cannot come between us again."

"Certainly not. And if they should try to force you . . .?"

"Never fear. I am free from them. Don Dámaso is looking after everything. He has found out what it is that I should have to do in case they make any attempt to take me from the convent and I shall never leave it except to become your wife. . . . Otherwise, I shall spend the rest of my life here."

"You will come out! Good heavens, you will come out! And very soon, too, so that we can be happy. I shall write to my father this very day. . . . But, tell me! These villainous people, didn't they do anything about it, when they found that you had run away?"

"I imagine, they were raving when Don Dámaso went to tell them where the bird had flown, whose disappearance had driven the *Maragota* just about crazy. They even threatened him, but he is a very self-possessed little man without a bit of cowardice about him and he turned on them and threatened with the law. You ought to know the laws."

"I ought! . . . But, tell me; why didn't you let me know where you were when you found yourself safely away from them?"

"I lost confidence. When I came here, all the old thoughts which had tormented me for so long came back. What if he does not love me? Supposing he has forgotten me?"

"Carmen!"

"Forgive me, dear! They had told me so many bad things about you! I had suffered so much! Besides, Don

Dámaso thought it prudent not to excite them any more, till he had them wholly subjugated and preferred that no one should know where I was. To comfort me and keep up my hope, Don Dámaso informed me that you were behaving yourself and leading a very quiet life. And I can never make you realize how much that cheered me. Go to see him at once. He will tell you everything. He is a very sympathetic old man."

Again the convent bell sounded sweetly and sadly.

"The service is over. Adiós, Gerardiño, dear heart! I do not wish them to find me here."

"I suppose that I may come to see you; that we may correspond?"

"I do not know about your coming to see me; you must ask Don Dámaso. Surely, you may write to me. Yes, indeed, we may write freely every day without anyone to intercept our letters. . . . The old hypocrite that she was! You must write me very long letters, very long; won't you, dear?"—giving him one of her soulful looks—"I will write a great deal, too; I will imagine that I am talking to you. . . . Come," she said to the elderly, deaf, little señora, going up to the bedside where she was still interested in Pulleiro's description of God only knows how many painful operations.

She offered her hand cordially to the medical student and said, smiling and happy:

"Adiós . . . Señor *Panduriño*!"

"Adiós. I wish you good luck!" replied Pulleiro.

"Thank you!" and to her fiancé, in a low voice: "Adiós, Gerardo! Do not forget me!"

"My life!"

"Adiós, adiós! Write to me tomorrow!" she said to him, pressing his hand very feelingly.

From her room door, she turned to smile at him.

The happy youth heaved a deep sigh of satisfaction, forgetful of all sorrow.

"Thanks to you, Señor *Panduriño*. Do not bear me ill will for this prank. Now I am ready to go. . . . Indeed, I am in a hurry, for I have much to do. . . . I have to write to Carmen," he added, preparing to leave.

“At least, put on your hat, you crazy loon!”

It was pouring when Gerardo went out into the street. The sky was black, the houses black and the roads running rivers. Ask him to take his oath, and the Señor Roquer y Paz will swear that he never saw a pleasanter, more radiant day than that. And if you need further testimony, apply to the Señorita Castro Retén.

Cheerfulness is to be found within ourselves.

All the following days were sunny for our happy friends. They wrote long and frequent letters, but, as they could see each other only in the vestibule, by Don Dámaso's advice, Gerardo abstained from calling on his fiancée. He consoled himself by listening to her sing in the church on Sundays and feast days, at which times he was greatly troubled by his *nervous cough*, that caused the singer to make many mistakes.

Evenings, armed with violins, flutes and guitars, Gerardo, Barcala, Augusto, Quiroga, Álvaro Sotto, Casás, Samoeiro and three or four others used to go to play and sing under one of the balconies of the house next to the convent, where lived some girls who went out sewing by the day; they were homely, presuming creatures who had left their country town and come to Compostela in the hope of getting beaux, but for several years, they had promenaded in the Alameda, on the Rúa and the Preguntoiro, looking at the students with languid eyes, but had never received any response to their advances. Imagine their feelings when this elaborate serenade was heard under their windows.

In honor of his friend, Samoeiro composed a new waltz.

Behind the crystal windows
Of this, thy balcony,
As everybody knows,
The sun is shining for me.

“I know, there are no balconies on the convent, but I couldn't make the rhyme without the word,” he explained to Gerardo.

When the girls behind the crystal of their balcony were

most happy and proud, along came a nightwatch and stopped the serenade.

"We are not doing any harm!"

"For all me, you might play and sing the night out; I like music, when it is good and well played; but it is by order of the Mayor.

"Impossible! Don Felipe Romero is a good, pleasant fellow with common sense, who does not do nor order done stupid things."

"Señor Romero has gone to Madrid on business for the city, to ask I don't know what of Señor Montero Ríos. They are always asking something. Now, his first lieutenant, Don Ventura Lozano, is acting Mayor and he says that he will have no singing nor playing on the streets and that the students are not to hang around the store windows nor speak to the girls on the street."

"Great Caesar's ghost!"

"Let's give him one!"

"For example: a good beating with a stick!"

"No, no violence! Leave him to me. I'll fix him," exclaimed Barcala. "The unendurable old fool; I have a long account to settle with him. We will have some fun. Mark my word, boys. I have an idea. Come on. Adiós, lean nymphs!" and he waved to the girls who were all decked out, sitting on the balcony. "A cruel decree of the implacable tyrant of Syracuse leaves you without music for *in aeternum*. Adiós!"

The following night, "The Battalion of Silent Volunteers" under the command of Barcala, made its appearance on the streets at the most crowded hour.

Most of the students enlisted and, the first night, they congregated in the deserted Quintana Square near the twenty-six saints of the Puerta Santa [Holy Door].

At the head of the first company, composed of the cream of the University, proudly marched the diminutive Nietiño. Gerardo carried the main banner which took the form of a kind of effigy—one of Samoeiro's grease spotted jackets clothing a broom, with a towel tied around for a necktie. The banners of the other companies were different pieces of underwear—drawers, shirts, socks, etc. Their

arms consisted of enormous pencils—those used for signs—and toy sabers and guns.

Augusto was chosen to give orders on account of his voice.

Out of consideration for their great services to the University, Cañotas with his armored hat and Merlo with his sign formed the ambulance corps and brought up the rear carrying their bootblack boxes. They swore by their banners to Cañotas, that they would shoot him if he opened his mouth while on the line of march, so he tried desperately to find an opportunity to desert. From the moment that Barcala gave the command to “Forward, march!” until the battalion disbanded leaving their banners at the feet of the twenty-six saints at the Puerta Santa—elected at Barcala’s suggestion, honorary colonels—both officers and soldiers preserved absolute silence and seriousness—never a word nor a smile.

In perfect formation, four abreast, sober and mute, at dusk, they marched through the city till, in the Rúa, they came across Don Ventura who, in company with several other old cranks, ceremoniously followed by a night watchman at a respectful distance, was slowly promenading with his hands behind his back grasping the insigne of his temporary office. As soon as they spied the Mayor pro tem, they silently presented arms and fell into line of escort to the “last Roman,” the first squad preceding and the rest following in step with his slow pace. Thus they walked through the streets to the great amusement of the populace, till the furious Ex-Judge of Órdenes took refuge in the Casino vowing a wholesale slaughter of the students, which would totally eclipse that of our old friend Herod.

Then the “Silent Volunteers,” still mute and grave, rendered the maximum honor to Don Ventura; they escorted him in one door of the Casino and walked out the other—only to wait in line on the street till that worthy, slave of habit, came out on the stroke of ten to go home for supper; they conducted him in like fashion, silent as the grave, to his own house.

This is the most celebrated prank, the students ever

played. From that time, the Ex-Judge of Órdenes could hardly step out onto the sidewalk without finding a company of "Volunteers" waiting to escort him; they increased in numbers as they went along, for every student whom they met joined the ranks.

It was not the worst of it, that the "Volunteers" accompanied him to the City Hall, the Casino and to his own house, but, one night when the sly old fellow muffled up to his eyes in his cape very cautiously stole out of *Mijillona's* with his friend Don Bartolomé—he of the counterfeit two dollars—where they had been calling on *Carabela* and *Michiña*, he found a double row of "Volunteers" lined up from the door far down the street, and this time they were reinforced by a drum corps which welcomed him; they presented arms and stood at attention as he passed between them and then fell in two by two behind the "last Roman" as he went down the line; the windows and balconies on the Camino Nuevo and the Carrera del Conde were filled with curious spectators who were greatly amused at the sight of the Mayor pro tem and his guard silently marching in step—a rather difficult feat—to the new drummers.

Rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat, rat-a-tat-a-tat-tat-a-tat-tat!

"Police!" commanded Don Ventura beside himself with anger when they reached the Alameda where Benitino kept order: "Police, arrest these criminals in *flagrante delicto* of disrespect to the highest authority in the municipality of Compostela."

"I haven't sufficient force, Señor Mayor!" answered the officer much troubled at being obliged to excuse himself.

The "last Roman" had to capitulate, retracting his unpremeditated ukase. To celebrate the student victory, Nietiño organized the largest troop of serenaders that had ever played and sung in Santiago and they heaped coals of fire on the Mayor pro tem's head by making their first stand in front of his house.

"Hurrah for Don Ventura!" cheered the director when they finished their first piece.

“Hurrah!” responded the boys.

“Hurrah for his pretty daughters!” again cried the gallant director.

“Hurrah!” they all cheered.

“Hurrah for Monchiña!” came another voice not quite so loud.

“Hurrah for Barcala!” added Augustino.

“Hurrah for the pair!” wound up Gerardo.

“I’ll give you a crack on the coco with my guitar!” threatened the poet.

* * * * *

One morning about the middle of May, Don Juan Roquer accompanied by Don Ventura, unexpectedly called on Señor Retén to solicit from *Maragota’s* husband, as Señorita Castro Retén’s guardian, Carmiña’s hand for Gerardo. Don Angelito basely tried to make some excuses, but Don Juan so expeditiously and cleverly solved each difficulty, that the poor man did not know how to raise any more objections and there was nothing for him to do but deliver the desired papers. The interview was brief and devoid of cordiality.

Rafael informed Gerardo a few days afterward, that Don Angelito and the *Maragota* had had a family row; that Jacinta berated her husband for his weakness and was not sparing of insults in her tongue lashing; finally, mother and son betook themselves to the country without bidding Don Angelito good bye.

That same afternoon, Don Juan was introduced to his prospective daughter-in-law at the house of his old friend, Don Ventura; she had come over from the convent on purpose to meet him.

“Gerardo,” said Don Juan to Carmen, making her blush: “has praised you in high terms, but now, I see, my dear, that he is but a poor painter and did not know how to give your portrait the color and shades which it deserves. You are very sweet and pretty; [The old rascal is a man of good taste.] but what pleases me most is that your goodness exceeds your beauty. Without doubt, you will make my son very happy; who, although he has been a little wild, is really a good boy at heart. . . . You will

have a bit of love to spare for this old man—I shall be more lonely than ever—; will you not, my daughter?”

She replied simply and cordially with great respect, offering her forehead to be kissed, and then embraced him heartily and kissed his hand.

“Yes, indeed, I will love you; I do already and we shall not permit you to leave us; shall we, Gerardo?”

“Carmina is right, father. You have worked long enough.”

While Don Juan was presenting, as a wedding gift to Carmen, a magnificent set of diamonds which had belonged to Gerardo’s mother, that young man improved the opportunity to make his peace with Señor Lozano.

“Don Ventura, I humbly ask your pardon for the impudent things which in a moment of great anxiety and excitement, I was rude enough to say to you. At the moment, I really did not know what I was saying; I was just about crazy. I thought, I had lost Carmen forever. Will you please forgive me? I am sincerely sorry and ashamed of myself.”

“Yes, I forgive you; although, it was extremely bad taste in a robust, young man like you to treat me as if I were a ragamuffin—me, to whom you owed twofold respect: first, that which my gray hairs claimed; second, my capacity of temporary guardian delegated to me by paternal authority. Perhaps, in the painful situation which you were suffering, you may see the teleological action of a divine, providential hand which chastises your injustice. . . . But, noble hearts do not nurse rancor. I take into consideration your youth and your paroxysm of passion.”

* * * * *

With June, came days of preparation for examinations and graduation exercises. Casimiro laid aside his own assignment and went to Gerardo to help him with his theme. In reality, they did little more than talk of their girls. That Monchiña was so hard-hearted. . . . The beadle surprised them and made Barcala go back to his own work.

“The time passes so rapidly. . . . And supposing you are not prepared when they call you?”

"It will not make any difference," answered Barcala: "They will pass him—well, just because—and they will pass me, because I know more law than the whole push. Besides, Rivas, three hours shut up in this box all alone!" protested the poet.

"Yes, I know; but you compromise me."

"Well, as there is no remedy . . .!"

The poet, as soon as he sat down at his own desk, threw all the reference books, he had brought from the library for his assistance onto the floor and wrote to the man who was supposed to have charge of him while in the law school, the notary, Fernández Suárez, one of the finest persons in the city, that famous, long letter in verse, which several consecutive classes learned by heart in the years that followed.

The next afternoon, our friends, the Trojans, celebrated the finishing of their course by a large banquet at Blanca's. When dessert was served, all their friends of the University came in to congratulate them, eat sweets and drink to their future successes. Nietiño led the biggest chorus he had ever conducted in his life, but not the most satisfactory one. The songs were mixed with talking and laughing. Once in a while, there was a moment of silence to listen to a toast. Madeira's and Samoeiro's were the brightest.

Barcala was the only one who remained quiet and thoughtful that afternoon. Toward night, the crowd demanded a speech and insisted that he stand on the table to deliver it.

"Do not congratulate us, my friends!" he said feelingly: "Pity us and let us envy you! The fortunate ones are you who remain here free from care, without anything to worry you—happy—young. We are about to be wedded to trouble. Work follows the care free, happy-go-lucky years, over the ending of which, we stupidly rejoice, instead of weep. Today, the union of our hearts is dissolved. Is it not painful to contemplate? We separate, each to begin in his own way to build his life. . . .In other words, we go to struggle unceasingly, year in and year out, every day and every hour, just to earn a decent living and an honorable mention in the newspapers of the town

where we happen to take up our abode for life. *Adiós*, my friends. We are going out into the world. Perhaps, we shall never meet again and, when we shake hands and cordially embrace one another, it may be for the last time. *Adiós*, happy years, rosy years, good years . . .! Unique years! We are already men. What a misfortune! Like the apostles, we are going to be scattered over the face of the earth, although not to preach the blessed gospel. Some will be lawyers—of these, certain ones will confine their efforts to office work, others will attain the dignity of judge; some will be consuls; others, journalists; for some await the glory and ease of the professor's chair; there are physicians and surgeons among us; there are those who will go into politics. How disgusting! This one will be deputy; that one, senator; perhaps a few may climb to the position of minister. Maybe, the wisest will be he who is content to settle down to the simple life in the peace and quietude of a country town. . . . I pray to the fickle and arbitrary goddess who presides over the destinies of men, that she may pour down upon us the gifts of good fortune. . . . But, however much she may favor us, she can never give us what we are losing today—youth and student days. She may load us with the things which people in their imbecility and shortsightedness call the good things of the world, but we can never be as well off as we have been; because, never more, alas! my friends, shall we be students. . . .

* * * * *

Two days later, in the church of Pilar, *Señorita* Castro Retén and Don Gerardo Roquer y Paz, with deep emotion, happily answered those questions which were so pleasant, so sweet, so musical; although put by Don Dámaso in his feeble, old, cracked voice, they sounded to them like celestial harmony.

“Will you take . . .? Do you receive . . .? Do you consent . . .?”

Don Juan was best man and Doña Segunda, matron of honor. Carmen feeling very happy, commended her future to the Mother of God, asking her protection; she beseeched the benediction of her parents from the great beyond. And Gerardo radiant with joy, also prayed—we

cannot say to whom, because, although he tried to fix his eyes on the altar, they would wander to the face of her who was already his wife.

There was a very quiet—on account of Carmen's mourning—wedding breakfast at the bride's house to which only a few friends were invited, the Lozano family—you should have heard the epithalamium in *vers libre* which the Ex-Judge of Órdenes reeled off—Elvirita Briay and the Trojans with whom Gerardo had been most intimate, who were all worn out with their labor of dressing.

"Is this Prince Albert becoming to me?"

"Is this the proper necktie to wear with this rig?"

"Can you wear tan shoes with a Prince Albert?"

"See here, Samoeiro, we shall have to begin calling you the *Ostrógoth* again if you are going to be such a barbarian."

"Well, I bought these new yesterday at Abollo's and my black ones have the heels all run over."

"Borrow Casás's patent leather ones."

"If he will lend them to me?"

"Yes, if you will get behind a chair or something once in a while and spit on them."

"Carmen and Gerardo," said Pulleiro to the newly wedded couple: "this summer, after the romería of Bergondo, *Panduriño's* Band will go to the Outeiro and play a polka with cornet obligato."

"I think *Panduriño* will be unable to exhibit his skill as a cornetist at romerías this season," replied Don Juan: "because, the railroad company, Señor Pulleiro, into the service of which you are about to enter as official physician and surgeon, will hardly grant a vacation so soon, I fear."

"You are my guardian angel, Don Juan."

"I will look out for your welfare too, boy. I will look out for you all," promised the optimistic Augusto, with as much assurance as if he held the keys of the future in his own hands.

"Señor minister!" saluted Barcala making an extravagant reverence.

"Ask anything you like, Casimiro. It is granted."

"Then, I would like," said the poet in a low voice speaking to Monchiña: "to have this señorita on my right,

who has not looked in my direction during the whole meal, turn her pretty face toward me and let me see her beautiful eyes and lovely smile."

"I do not wish to *see visions*," replied the one to whom the allusion was made.

"I assure you, señorita," answered Casimiro, placing his hand solemnly on his heart: "I have greatly improved since you saw me. I am really dangerous."

"How frightful!"

"Be brave!"

"Pardon me, brother, I have nothing to give."

"I have enough for us both."

"You! What have you?" feigning disdain.

"I possess a new title, that of lawyer, which, to be sure, has not been of any great service to me yet, but which will as soon as I get any cases, which is going to be without delay. I am owner of some good, fertile acres and a lonely, little house in Túy, that is crying for the joy of your presence. And, besides, and above all, I have a very big heart to love you a great deal, a very great deal, all my life."

"Casimiro! . . . You are not trifling with me?"

"No, my dear, I will be good and serious from now on. I have always loved you."

"Aaaay! Thank the Lord! But, if you deceive me, I will cut off your moustache."

"Oh no, pretty one, because it is very becoming to me."

That night, the bells of the Carrilana jingled more merrily than ever as it carried the happy pair along the road to Paradise. Gerardo knowing how to please Carmiña, gave up a wedding trip to spend the honeymoon in the glory of the lights and shades of the Mariñas.

And where could they find a better place? What is Paris, London, Vienna or any other city or country compared to one of these shady chestnut woods and the unparalleled lands which appear to have been made for a lovers' nest?

"Dearest," begged Carmiña of her husband one afternoon as they were sitting in the summer-house of the garden, shaded by honeysuckles and jasmines; "promise me that we shall come here every year even if it may cause

you some inconvenience. Look at this blessed landscape! Everything is so friendly; all savor of love—the trees, the meadows, the brooks, the little birds. . . . Even the sharp pointed furze makes a restful softness. Here, sleep my parents; here, I believed in you; here, you made me happy; here, I wept for you. . . .”

The sacred music of a kiss was heard. Some linnets in the neighboring chestnuts poured forth their song. The sound of the waves breaking on the beach at Grandarío came to them like a faint murmur. The trembling leaves were surrendering themselves to the caresses of the breeze. They could smell the strong, healthful odor of healthy, vigorous, fecund earth. The fig trees, mint and other herbs perfumed the air with that subtle, voluptuous aroma of Galicia. The setting sun reddened the windows of the houses of Miño on the opposite side of the river, fairly making them blaze.

The silvery toned bell on the little church rang the Angelus.

“Love! . . . Love! . . .”

The felicity of the field was sung by the voice of a distant cart. Boys were singing on their way home from school and the women, too, as they drove their flocks and herds.

The black-birds and linnets formed a chorus. The pines of Morujo murmured in their melancholy.

A young girl in the distance, intoned her evening chant of thanksgiving, which ascended like a mystic hallelujah from the peace of this divine land.

I have a little white house
Nestling among the laurels
By the river in the Mariñas;
Blessed love and peace are mine.
Can there be more in life?

A tear of happiness trembled on the lashes of those marvelous brown eyes.

“Gerardo! . . . Heart’s dearest!”

“Carmina! . . . My love!”



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